

BRITISH
TRADE UNIONISM TO-DAY

A Survey

by

G. D. H. COLE

With the Collaboration of
Thirty Trade Union Leaders
and other Experts

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PREFACE

SIDNEY AND BEATRICE WEBB published their *History of Trade Unionism* in 1894 and *Industrial Democracy* in 1897. Since then, I believe, no comprehensive account of the British Trade Union movement has been issued. Many small books have given a general summary of the growth and character of the movement; but there has been no attempt to survey it as a whole, so as to give a balanced picture of Trade Unionism both in general and in each of the principal industries and services. This is what I have tried to do in the present volume, as far as limitations of space have made it possible. With the collaboration of thirty experts in various phases of the subject, I have sought to cover the whole ground, at any rate in outline. Inevitably, this has involved a great deal of compression; and I offer my apologies to those contributors whose articles I have been compelled to curtail for reasons of space, though I should often have liked to admit much fuller treatment. All contributions that are unsigned I have written; and for these I accept sole responsibility. Mr. A. W. Filson, who has been of the greatest assistance to me, has been associated with me as editor, and has been responsible jointly with me for the work of revision and for the index. To him, to those who have contributed chapters, and to the numerous friends who have responded to my appeals for help and information, I owe cordial thanks.

Hendon, 1938

G. D. H. C.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK is an attempt to describe the Trade Union movement as it exists in Great Britain today. It opens, indeed, with a very brief outline of Trade Union history; for present-day Trade Unionism cannot be adequately understood except in relation to its past. British Trade Unionism was not created as a scientifically organised movement inspired from a single centre; it was not even remoulded at any time in accordance with a common plan. It grew and developed of itself, as a direct response to needs immediately felt by one body of workers after another; and each group, when it could not find an existing Union to meet its needs, created a new Union of its own and only subsequently, if at all, linked itself up with the rest of the movement. The consequence is that, from the standpoint of the formalist, British Trade Unionism is a chaos—though much less a chaos than it was even a generation ago. Even today there are often rival Unions seeking to enrol the same types of workers—rival, not because of any doctrinal differences, but simply because they have been started, or have developed, on overlapping lines. The General Council of the Trades Union Congress does, nowadays, attempt to deal with certain conflicts of jurisdiction between societies affiliated to Congress; but this development is quite recent—mainly since the war—and even today Congress claims no right to settle finally what classes of workers each of its affiliated Unions may enrol. There is no ‘jurisdictional’ system such as exists in the American Federation of Labor, and no neat assignment of each type of worker to his one and only appropriate Union, such as existed in Germany up to the destruction of German Trade Unionism in 1933.

Amalgamation of Unions into larger and more inclusive bodies, and in some cases inter-union agreements providing for a demarcation of membership, have indeed since 1918 reduced the amount of overlapping and the number of inter-union disputes. But plenty remain. An engine-driver can choose between the National Union of Railwaymen and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. An agricultural labourer can join either the National Union of Agricultural Workers or the agricultural section of the Transport and General Workers' Union. A shop assistant may enrol in either the Shop Assistants' Union or the Distributive Workers'. A pattern-maker can choose between the United Patternmakers' Association and the Amalgamated Engineering Union. Finally, over the immense field covered by the 'general labour' Unions, there is unceasing competition between the National Union of General and Municipal Workers and the Transport and General Workers' Union.

These are but a few instances, chosen almost at random from a much larger number. Yet it remains true that such rivalries have become fewer. Before the war there were at least ten general labour Unions of some size, all competing for members; now there are only two. The bricklayers have amalgamated their two rival Unions; the Woodworkers embody at least four societies of carpenters and cabinet-makers; the Amalgamated Engineering Union includes with the old Amalgamated Society of Engineers half a dozen of its pre-war rivals among the skilled engineering craftsmen. The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation has swallowed up all the important Unions in the industry except the Blastfurnacemen. The three largest Unions of Dyers and Finishers are now one; the Tailors' and Garment Workers' Union has swallowed up most of the rival societies in the clothing trades.

This list of amalgamations is, again, hardly more than a random sample, indicative of a much more widespread tendency. But there are certain industries which this tendency has hardly touched. The cotton and printing

industries are still organised almost exactly as they were in 1914, in a number of parallel sectional craft Unions, loosely federated into wider industrial groupings. In these cases, however, there is not much overlapping. Each society has, generally speaking, its own special field plainly marked out for it, and there is, as a rule, only one society catering for any particular type of worker in any one place. Not overlapping but sectional organisation is the characteristic of these and of certain other industries in which the craft spirit remains firmly entrenched.

It would be easy enough to make, on paper, a tidy plan of organisation for the British Trade Union movement. Indeed, such plans have often been outlined; and the Trades Union Congress has been adjured to take in hand the reorganisation of the Trade Union movement on more scientific lines. Most often, the would-be reformers have advocated industry as against craft as the basis of organisation. They have wanted all workers in or about the mines, or the railways, or the cotton industry, to be enrolled in a single Union, and all the industrial Unions thus created to be linked closely together in a common federation, with arrangements for transfer of membership from one Union to another where a worker shifts from industry to industry.

Under existing conditions, no such comprehensive plan of reorganisation stands the smallest chance of acceptance. Trade Union members cannot be handed from one Union to another at the mere *fiat* of any central body. It may be possible by agreement to transfer small groups here and there; but even this is difficult, and may easily cause the workers in question to drop out of the movement altogether. Even if certain strongly-placed groups may succeed in making membership of a particular Union practically compulsory, because a workman cannot secure employment without it, this remains exceptional. The basis of Trade Union membership is, in the vast majority of cases, essentially voluntary. The workers join a Union because they want to join it; and they cannot

be made to accept membership of a different Union against their will. Ordinarily, the most the Trades Union Congress sets out to do is to prevent deliberate 'poaching'—that is, attempts by a Union to seduce the members of another Union, or to enrol new members in trades or establishments in which existing Unions are already firmly entrenched. And it can do even this only within limits, and only when the Union concerned is prepared to accept its verdict rather than sever its connection with the Congress. For membership of the T.U.C. is also voluntary, and it is not necessarily fatal to a Trade Union to be outside it.

In these circumstances, overlapping can be prevented, and more scientific forms of organisation developed, only by consent, and only by a gradual process. Moreover, it is not easy to secure agreement concerning the basis on which organisation ought to rest. It may seem obvious at first sight that all railway workers are best united in a single society. But it will not seem obvious to skilled engineering or other craftsmen employed in a railway locomotive shop, who may in a year's time be working in some quite different branch of engineering, and are in any case fully as determined to defend the craft standards which they share with their fellow-engineers in many industries as to join with their fellow-railwaymen in a general campaign for bettering railway conditions. Again, railway companies own ships, road vehicles, hotels, and many other auxiliary services. If industrial unionism is to be the rule, is a seaman employed by a railway company to be in the railway or the shipping industrial Union?

In some instances, no doubt, the appropriate lines of demarcation between industry and industry can easily be drawn so as to leave only a few doubtful cases. But this is by no means always true. The Co-operative movement, for example, provides as difficult a problem as the railways. The Co-operatives employ in addition to distributive workers many thousands of productive workers in a large number of trades. Ought a Co-operative baker or tailor to be organised with other Co-operative employees

in the Distributive Workers' Union, or ought he to be in the Union which enrolls other workers in his own trade or industry? The question is unanswerable, on any ground of principle. It can be answered in practice only by a continual process of give and take, in which the wishes of the particular workers concerned are bound to play a large part in deciding the issue.

Nor is the problem of demarcation the only difficulty in the way of a comprehensive scheme of 'union by industry'. There is a second, and much more formidable, difficulty. Skilled craftsmen ordinarily join a Union fully as much on account of special services which it can perform for them as craftsmen as for its power to mobilise the entire labour force of an industry against the employers. Craft Unions are usually friendly societies as well as agencies for collective bargaining. They provide sick, funeral, superannuation and unemployment benefits as well as dispute benefits. They look after their members' legal interests in cases of workmens' compensation or employers' liability. They insure tools, and provide experts who will take up the member's case for him in any matter arising out of the conditions peculiar to his craft—such as the eyesight test required of engine-drivers. They exist, moreover, for the protection of the craft and its privileges, not only against the employers, but also, on occasion, against other workers. They seek to regulate the proportion of apprentices admitted to the trade, to prevent the trade from being encroached on by members of other crafts or by less skilled workers, and to safeguard craft interests in face of industrial changes which threaten their members with displacement.

Craft Unionists are apt to hold that interests of these types will not be adequately looked after inside an industrial Union which includes not only many different crafts but also skilled and less skilled workers together. They are apt to enquire whether a Union which includes all grades in an industry will be prepared to protect a skilled minority against encroachment on its craft privileges by the less

skilled majority, as well as whether such a Union will provide them with friendly benefits on as satisfactory a basis as a craft Union, or give as expert attention to their special needs. If Trade Unions were simply agencies for waging perpetual mass-warfare against the capitalist class, these issues would not be important; and they often seem unimportant to class-conscious militants who regard Trade Unionism simply as an instrument of the class-struggle. But it is quite unrealistic to regard Trade Unionism in this way. Trade Unions arise as natural responses of the workers to the conditions of capitalist employment. They arise as bodies for the collective defence of the immediate interests of particular groups of workers and for the improvement of these workers' conditions of life. The general antagonism between employer and worker inherent in the wage-relationship may create a general sense of working-class solidarity, and cause the entire Trade Union movement to act together on certain issues, as it did in the General Strike of 1926. But this general solidarity does not do away with lesser divergences of interest and outlook, or prevent Trade Unions from differing one from another except when there has arisen an immediate issue deep enough and broad enough in its class appeal to suspend, for the time being, interest in the smaller purposes which each Trade Union ordinarily pursues from day to day. At a sufficiently acute point in the class-struggle, Trade Unionism may act as one. In periods of relative quiescence, each Union mainly pursues its own separate concerns, or at most makes common cause only with other Unions closely related to it.

It may be possible, over an ever-widening field, to transcend craft unionism. But this will not come merely by wishing for it. It will come about either because closer combination among employers and an intensification of the industrial struggle compel the craftsmen to adopt new methods, or because skilled crafts are themselves more and more threatened and superseded by the growth of more highly mechanised processes, making possible the

employment of less skilled kinds of labour. Either of these tendencies, or both working together, may weaken craft unionism and impel skilled and less skilled workers towards wider amalgamations. Moreover, the supersession of highly skilled craftsmen by merely dexterous machine-minders makes labour more easily transferable, and breaks down the divisions not only between craft and craft, but also between industry and industry. This largely accounts for the relative growth in recent years of the numbers organised in the 'general labour' Unions, as compared with Unions confined to a particular trade or industry.

Nevertheless, craft unionism dies hard. The craft bond of unity is narrow; but it needs no imagination for a worker to become conscious of its existence. It involves no more than an implied criticism of the economic system as it is, and no conscious determination to change it. Craft unionism is antecedent in time to any sort of Socialism; it arises directly and immediately out of the conditions of wage-earning employment, as soon as, even on a small scale, a journeyman class appears. Nor does the craft appeal lose its force as wider forms of solidarity emerge, save to the extent to which crafts are actually superseded by the advance of mechanisation. Even under developed capitalism, the craftsman, as long as he survives at all, continues to feel the need for special protection of his craft interests.

Of course, the attempt can be made to reconcile the craftsmen's claims with the merging of their separate Unions in more inclusive combinations. They can be given special representation in a wider Union, of which they form only a section. But they are apt to feel that this is not quite the same thing—witness the N.U.R.'s failure to absorb the engine-drivers and the secession of the Thames lightermen from the Transport and General Workers' Union after they had taken part in the amalgamation which created it. The skilled workers are sometimes ready enough, as in the A.E.U., to admit the less skilled workers to membership, where they are confident that effective

control of the Union will remain in their own hands. But the less skilled workers, who have interests of their own to defend, are sometimes unwilling to accept membership on these terms. The less skilled engineering workers, where they are organised at all, still belong in greater numbers to the National Union of General and Municipal Workers than to the A.E.U.

It is futile to blame the craftsmen for attending to their own sectional interests. An engine-driver's prospects in life may be gone if he fails to pass the eyesight test; and his Union may succeed in getting an adverse judgment reversed when it has been made on inadequate grounds. The skilled engineers' or carpenters' standard rates would be speedily undermined if employers were left free to employ less skilled labourers on any job they chose. The London compositors would soon sink from their high estate if they ceased to concern themselves with the right of entry to the trade. In fact, there is in all Trade Unions of skilled workers an element of monopoly akin to that which exists much more strongly in the professional associations of doctors, lawyers and other chartered groups of non-manual workers. It is absurd to expect the skilled workmen not to attend to their own special interests in a society dominated by the gospel of 'devil take the hindmost'. The most that can be expected of them is a preparedness to forget their sectional interests in moments of real crisis, when issues vital to the entire working class are at stake.

The Trade Unions of less skilled workers are not in a position, even if they so desired, to emulate the methods of the craft Unions. Their members cannot, for the most part, afford to pay contributions high enough to provide any considerable friendly benefits. They too need legal protection, in cases of workmen's compensation and employers' liability, fully as much as the craft Unionists; but they have to rely on less specialised advocacy of their claims. A relatively small body of craft Unionists, paying high contributions, can maintain a fairly efficient society; but the

small contributions of the less skilled workers must be aggregated into large masses in order to afford any adequate protection. Some quite small craft Unions, such as the London Society of Compositors, are highly efficient; but a small general labour, or labourers' Union can hardly avoid being ineffective.

Nor must it be forgotten that there are, on the whole, wide differences in education and competence in self-government between the skilled and the less skilled workers. To a remarkable extent, craftsmanship is hereditary, if not in a particular craft, at all events in the sense that the children of skilled workers tend to enter skilled, and the children of labourers unskilled, occupations. The working class has not been rendered homogeneous either by the growth of popular education or by the gradual supersession of craftsmanship in one occupation after another. It is still relatively easy for the skilled workers, and relatively difficult for the less skilled, to find competent branch secretaries and local negotiators from their own ranks. Accordingly the Unions organising less skilled workers have to rely largely on paid officials for the representation of their members' interests in local as well as in national matters.

It is true that the 'New Unionism' of 1889, which first effectively brought the less skilled workers into the Trade Union movement—or rather brought them back into it, after an absence which had lasted from the collapse of Owenite Trade Unionism in 1834—was the expression of a spirit of class-solidarity alien to the Trade Unionism of the 'seventies and 'eighties. But to a substantial extent the New Unionism was helped—to establish itself by the support of Socialist workmen who themselves belonged to the already organised skilled crafts. Ben Tillet and Will Thorne were indeed labourers; but Tom Mann and John Burns were both skilled engineers, Keir Hardie was a skilled coal-hewer, and John Hodge a steel-smelter. Charles Duncan, who helped to form the Workers' Union, was yet another skilled engineer.

The New Unionism, under Socialist leadership, set out to rebuild the Trade Union movement on a basis of class instead of craft. At the outset, the New Unionists denounced all friendly benefits, and sought to build up their societies as purely fighting combinations. But this was impossible. As soon as the initial impetus of militancy had spent its force, there began a process of assimilation between the old Unionism and the new. The New Unions, though they could not afford high contributions and high friendly benefits, in many cases instituted voluntary friendly funds, in order the better to hold a nucleus of members together in bad times. They were drawn into collective bargaining, sometimes alone and sometimes jointly with the craft Unions, and found themselves signing collective agreements which involved at least a temporary suspension of militant tactics. They became, in their industrial methods, half-assimilated to the older Unions, which on their side came a part of the way to meet them. The sharp distinctions between craft unionism and militant class unionism became blurred and sometimes vanished altogether. A generation after 1889 there was hardly a pin to choose between the leadership of the old Unionism and the new. In certain industries, such as engineering, being a 'less skilled' worker had become, to all intents and purposes, a sort of craft.

This development was inevitable, in view of the condition of British capitalism. For it was possible, for the less skilled workers as well as for the skilled, to squeeze concessions out of the employers, provided the two groups of workers were prepared to act together. Before 1889 the leaders of the craft Unions had mostly regarded the less skilled workers as incapable of any sort of organisation; when the New Unionism refuted this view, the craft Unions remained in a strong enough position to admit it to a merely junior partnership in collective bargaining, mainly on their own terms. These terms included, naturally, respect by the 'labourers' Unions for the craftsmen's monopolies of particular skilled trades, and abstention from any attempt

to seduce the craftsmen from allegiance to their own Unions.

Thus there emerged in engineering, shipbuilding, building, and a number of other industries dominated by skilled craftsmen, a dichotomy between the organisations of skilled craftsmen and labourers. But there were other industries in which no such line could be clearly drawn—usually because there was no system of apprenticeship to mark off the craftsmen from workers of inferior grades. In the coal mines, for example, and later on the railways, except in the 'footplate' grades and in the railway engineering shops, Trade Unionism did develop on an inclusive basis which brought all grades together in one Union on approximately equal terms. Industries of this type became naturally happier hunting grounds for Socialists than industries in which class sub-divisions within the working class remained more clearly marked. Moreover, these industries were of such kinds as to be brought much more directly and constantly into relations with the State. The miners, on account of the special dangers attending their work, were continually pressing for legislation to promote safety. The railwaymen, working in an industry which had received special powers from Parliament, pressed for special protection of their interests as a *quid pro quo*. In both cases, industrial conditions led to an insistent demand for nationalisation; and this demand made the workers relatively easy converts to the rest of the Socialist gospel. In the mines and on the railways, Socialism is a good deal more prevalent among Trade Unionists than in other industries.

But nowhere can the majority of Trade Unionists, even today, be regarded as convinced Socialists in any theoretical sense. The average workman has indeed some sense of class-solidarity, both instinctive and acquired, and he has in a vague way perhaps accepted Socialism, as embodied in the Labour Party's policy, as an ultimate objective. But he has a much clearer understanding of immediate Trade Union objectives than of any sort of Socialism;

and he can be won for Socialism only to the extent that Socialism is translated into terms of his immediate aims and consciously-felt grievances. Under capitalism, neither Socialism nor any other 'ism' will ever capture the majority of the workers in any doctrinal sense. It may secure their allegiance, but only by constituting itself the champion of their immediate wants.

In this study of Trade Unionism as it is, I have enlisted the help of a number of leading Trade Unionists, who have written about their own Trade Unions and industries much more realistically than I, as an outsider, could have hoped to do. My aim has been to present not an idealised picture of Trade Unionism as enthusiastic Socialists would like it to be, but a sober account of it as it actually is and works under the conditions of today. In my own contributions, I have not hesitated to express my own views, about what might be as well as what is—knowing that some of the other contributors will not agree with me on a number of points, but trying so to state my case as to show an understanding of their point of view, and especially of the difficulties confronting a Trade Union official who, however keenly he may desire the abolition of capitalism, has to serve the interests of his members under it as best he can, because that is the job he has been pre-eminently chosen to do. A realistic picture of this sort may disappoint some readers who would prefer a propagandist tract on Trade Unionism as Socialists would like it to be to an objective study of it as it actually is. But I believe that the propagandists of Socialism will do much better work if they approach Trade Unionism with a knowledge of its realities and limitations than if they act in the mistaken belief that, because the very fact of the class-struggle provides an instinctive basis for class-solidarity, therefore Trade Unionism as a movement can be simply interpreted in terms of this struggle, and of nothing else. It is not sheer wickedness or wanton blindness that makes Trade Unionism the complex and confusing affair of mixed motives and policies that it undoubtedly is. Trade Unionism

exists under the shadow of capitalism and is necessarily made to some extent in the image of capitalism. If Socialists are to come to terms with it, they must comprehend it and, while striving to enlarge its vision, still take it as it is.

PART I

TRADE UNION HISTORY

EARLY DAYS

THE CONTINUOUS HISTORY of Trade Unionism in Great Britain dates from the early years of the nineteenth century. There were Trade Unions long before that; but no continuous record of their activities has been preserved. Even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was becoming common for journeymen to combine for the protection of their crafts against interlopers and for the maintenance of their trade customs and standards of wages and conditions of work. In the eighteenth century we find many records of combination not only among the skilled craftsmen in the towns, but also over wider areas among the woollen weavers and other classes of textile workers, who were employed largely in their own homes or in cottage workshops, under the 'domestic' system. These larger combinations were necessary, especially among the weavers, because the woollen industry was already dominated by rich merchant clothiers producing for a wide market, so that no one village could easily raise its wages or conditions above those prevailing for similar work in the surrounding areas.

Very often the aim of combination among the textile workers was in the first instance not to strike, but to petition Parliament or the county justices of the peace to fix wages. The statute of Queen Elizabeth and certain later Acts relating to particular trades were then still on the statute book, and there was no doubt that the justices were empowered to fix rates of wages if they wished to do so. There was, however, already both in Parliament and among the justices a growing prejudice against interfering

with the employer's right to engage workers at what wages he chose; and for the most part the weavers' petitions met with no favourable response.

It seems to have been regarded as lawful for the workers to combine, as long as they did so only with the object of petitioning the public authorities. But it was another matter when, having failed to secure redress by that method, they attempted by the threat of strike action to take matters into their own hands. To an increasing extent the courts of law took the view that any combination of the latter sort constituted a criminal conspiracy against public order; and the combinations formed from time to time outside the corporate towns were repeatedly broken up by the law.

† The position was often not quite the same in the corporate towns, where the little local Trade Clubs of skilled craftsmen were usually let alone, and even in many cases bargained openly with the employers in their several trades. This happened because the class distinction between master and man, already very marked in the woollen trades and in a few other industries, such as mining, which were already dominated by the large-scale capitalist, was far less clear in the urban crafts. Skilled labour was scarce in face of rising demand for its products; and the small urban masters usually preferred coming to terms with their journeymen to quarrelling with them at the risk of being deprived of their supply of skilled workers. The masters, who were also often the magistrates, were therefore usually not disposed to put down the men's combinations unless they were particularly troublesome; and it seems clear that in the latter part of the eighteenth century many of the Trade Clubs of skilled workers became very powerful, and were able effectively to enforce the strict limitation of apprentices and to secure higher wages as the prosperity of the masters increased. Their strength became greater still with the advent of steam-power and the factory system; for the Industrial Revolution in its earlier phases hardly changed at all the technique

of production in most of the urban crafts, but by increasing the wealth of the rich expanded the demand for skilled labour, both in the making of goods for consumption and in the construction of the new power-driven machines.

In 1799 and 1800, the Government, disposed in its fear of the French Revolution to regard all forms of working-class organisation as potential centres of rebellion, passed the Combination Acts, and thus declared every sort of Trade Union to be a criminal conspiracy. But these Acts were never at all completely enforced. The attempts of the weavers, miners, and factory workers to combine were broken up more ruthlessly than ever by the county justices; but once again the majority of urban small masters found it more convenient to negotiate with the craftsmen's combinations than to attempt to put them down. To a considerable extent, the craftsmen's Trade Clubs disguised themselves as friendly societies—as indeed they were, in addition to their Trade Union functions. Thus, disguised or openly, many of them continued to bargain and even on occasion to strike with impunity during the entire period for which the Combination Acts remained in force.

When the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815, there was a sharp fall in prices, accompanied by a collapse of industry and a great growth of unemployment in many trades. These were the years in which Radical agitation, which had been almost stamped out by Pitt's repressive measures at the end of the eighteenth century, was resumed on a large scale all over the country under the leadership of William Cobbett and 'Orator' Henry Hunt—to be met by fresh measures of repression from the side of the Government. In 1817 the Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth, passed his 'Gagging Acts' for the suppression of Radical newspapers and seditious meetings; and when the agitation went on in spite of the law, still more drastic repressive measures were adopted. The 'Peterloo Massacre' of 1819, when soldiers rode into a great orderly Reform demonstration addressed by Henry Hunt in St. Peter's Fields

at Manchester, and many unarmed persons, including women and children, were trampled underfoot, was followed by the 'Six Acts' of the same year, giving the authorities drastic powers to prevent illegal drilling, seditious meetings and publications, and the like. But as industry began to settle down in the early 'twenties after the post-war troubles, the repression was relaxed; and in 1824-5 the Combination Acts were repealed, and Trade Unions were granted at any rate a scanty measure of legal toleration.

All through the post-war years of unrest, Trade Unionism had been spreading apace, despite the repressive laws. In 1818 we hear, in both Manchester and London, of the first abortive attempt to form a 'General Union' of the workers in all trades, under the leadership of John Gast, of the London shipwrights, who was also largely responsible for *The Gorgon*, the first known Trade Union newspaper. At the same time, there were great strikes in Lancashire among the textile workers; and the miners in Durham and Northumberland also attempted to organise, only to meet with prompt and savage suppression at the hands of the great coal-owning landlords who dominated the county magistracy.

With the repeal of the Combination Laws in 1824, Trade Unionism came out much more into the open; and from this date we can trace the continuous history of quite a number of societies. We find too the Trade Clubs of London combined, under Gast's leadership, in a Metropolitan Trades Committee—the forerunner of the London Trades Council of today. These were times of rapidly growing boom in trade, accompanied by rising prices. There were numerous strikes for higher wages and improved conditions, and many of them were successful. Then came, in 1825, the first of the great financial and business crises of the nineteenth century; and the Trade Unions found themselves no longer fighting for improved conditions, but struggling to resist drastic reductions in wages. Political Radicalism, which had ebbed during the

boom, began again to grow apace; and side by side with it Trade Unionism grew also. In 1829 John Doherty, the leader of the Lancashire cotton spinners, got together a conference of Spinners' Societies from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and persuaded it to form the Grand General Union of Spinners of Great Britain and Ireland. Encouraged by this success, Doherty went on in the following year to a still more ambitious project, a revival of the idea of a 'General Union' of all workers. He persuaded a conference to create the National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour, which speedily gathered numerous adherents among the Trade Societies of the Midlands and South Wales, as well as among those of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The various building crafts, about the same time, began to organise a national Operative Builders' Union designed to cover the whole country; and new combines arose among the miners in the north-eastern counties and elsewhere. There was a great stirring of Trade Union activity in almost every trade; and at the same time Co-operative Societies sprang into existence in large numbers under the inspiration of Robert Owen's ideas.

While this ferment was going on in industry, the agitation for the Reform of Parliament was approaching its culmination. In 1832 the great Whig Reform Act became law, disfranchising the rotten boroughs and redistributing seats in Parliament to the more populous counties and the rapidly growing industrial towns. But though the Act enfranchised the middle classes, it left the workers, who had played a leading part in the Reform struggle, wholly without votes. The Reformed Parliament did indeed pass an improved Factory Act in 1833; but, that done, it turned to the reform of the Poor Laws on principles which were soon to earn it the bitter hatred of a large section of the working class. Under the old Poor Law parish relief had been available in aid of wages in bad times to the domestic workers, including the handloom weavers, who were being gradually crushed out by the introduction of power-driven

machinery, as well as to the factory workers. The system, prevalent in the agricultural South, whereby the wages of men actually in full employment had been regularly subsidised out of the poor rates, had never been much applied in the industrial districts; but poor relief had been a valuable safeguard against sheer starvation when trade was slack. The new Poor Law, however, was designed to abolish altogether any sort of outdoor relief to the able-bodied, and to offer applicants the alternative of starvation or entry into the workhouse—the hated ‘Bastille’, as the workers soon learnt to call it.

The new Poor Law had not yet become law, but the controversy over it was already raging, when the great Trade Union movement of 1832–4 reached its culminating point. Trade was again improving, after a renewed depression during the later phases of the Reform struggle; and the workers, already disillusioned at their ‘betrayal’ by their middle-class allies, came flocking into the Trade Unions in thousands.

It was at this stage that Robert Owen, already the inspirer of a rapidly-growing Co-operative movement, made his sudden incursion into the Trade Union world. Owen was a self-made man, who had become the chief owner of the most famous and successful cotton-mill in Great Britain. At his New Lanark factory he had won for himself an immense reputation as a philanthropic employer. He had refused to allow more than a limited dividend on the capital employed in the business, and had applied all surplus profits to schemes for the benefit of the workers. When production was interrupted by shortage of material during the war, he had paid the operatives their wages all the same. He had demonstrated the economic advantages of a shorter working day and healthier conditions of employment; and he had agitated hard both among his fellow-employers and by urging the Government and Parliament in favour of factory legislation. “

But, long before Robert Owen became a Trade Union leader, he had gone a great way beyond this. He had

become convinced at an early stage that what men were depended mainly on their environment, and that if they could begin with a good environment and a sound education vice and misery would speedily vanish out of the world. But he had also become convinced that it was impossible to give men these advantages under a competitive industrial system, which deliberately set man against man. He wanted all men, instead of trying to get the better one of another, to co-operate in making the most of the rapidly expanding power to create wealth. ✓

When the war ended, and unemployment spread far and wide, Owen came forward with his 'Plan'. He wanted the State and the rich, instead of doling out a niggardly relief to keep the poor from utter starvation, to provide funds for setting them to work in Co-operative Colonies, or 'Villages of Co-operation', in which they could produce what they needed for their own consumption, either directly, or by way of exchanges between one village and another. Owen made his appeal first of all to the Government and to Parliament, and thereafter to anyone who would listen. But his faith at this stage was not in action by the workers; for he considered them too helpless and too much in the grip of evil circumstances to be able to regenerate themselves. The governing classes, however, paid no attention to his appeals; and at length Owen turned his back on the corruptions of Europe and set out for the United States, where he hoped to establish his Villages of Co-operation in the still uncontaminated atmosphere of the New World. Already his 'Plan' had expanded from a means of relieving unemployment to a universal scheme for the regeneration of society by the establishment of Socialist communities; and it was to his projects that, in Great Britain, the name 'Socialist' was first applied. Simultaneously Fourier and his followers were advocating somewhat similar doctrines in France; and to these too the name 'Socialist' became attached.

In the United States Owen founded his settlement of New Harmony, which ultimately failed as a Socialist

community and was reconstituted on a more individualistic basis. But while he was away in America, the working classes in Great Britain had begun to adopt his doctrines. In the 1820's Co-operative Societies began to spring up apace, less with the object of engaging in mutual trade than in the hope of building up funds which would enable them to establish Villages of Co-operation on the lines of Owen's Plan. At the same time the Trade Unions, spreading fast after the repeal of the Combination Acts, began to set up Co-operative Societies of their own, in the form of 'Union Shops', in which the workers joined together to produce goods in their own workshops without any employer to exact a profit from their labour.

Owen came back from America, after the failure of New Harmony, to find himself already acclaimed as the leader of a growing working-class crusade. After some hesitation—for he still had little belief in the power of the workers to act for themselves, and still hoped to convert the richer classes to acceptance of his Plan—he accepted the leadership which was thrust upon him. Under his influence the great Builders' Union began to make preparations for the reorganisation of the building industry under a Grand National Guild of Builders, to be formed by the Trade Unions with the object of contracting collectively for every type of building work. Owen also set out to provide markets for the Co-operative 'Union Shops' by founding Equitable Labour Exchanges, at which the products of the various trades could be exchanged on the basis of the 'labour-time' spent in producing them. He had put forward this 'labour-time' theory of value as early as 1821 in his famous *Report to the County of Lanark*, and had thus become the forerunner of the Socialist school of political economy which was soon developed further by William Thompson and Thomas Hodgskin, and later by Karl Marx.

In 1833 Owen decided on a still more ambitious step. At a conference of supporters of his Plan, including both Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies, he launched

his proposal for a Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, or more shortly, '*the Trades Union*', of which all the Trade Societies and Clubs in Great Britain were invited to become branches or sections. Owen thus revived, on a much larger scale, John Doherty's organisation of 1830, and once more attempted to unite the entire working class, and such other members of the 'industrious classes' as were prepared to throw in their lot with the workers, in a single all-embracing Union.

The struggle which followed was short and decisive. The new movement spread with extraordinary speed, and is said to have enrolled half a million members within the first few months. Some of the big Unions which had supported it at first—the Builders, Spinners, Potters, Clothiers, and the surviving Yorkshire section of Doherty's National Association of 1830—in the end refused to range themselves in the G.N.C.T.U.; but they worked in association with it. In all the Trade Union movement in the early months of 1834 probably reached a membership of nearly a million—a total which was not regained by the Trades Union Congress until 1890. But before the new body had time to sort out its new recruits into any sort of order, it found itself involved in a whole series of strikes and lock-outs up and down the country. Some sections had no sooner joined the Union than they put forward large demands, and struck in order to secure them; and in other cases, as in the 'Derby turn-out', the employers promptly locked out those who joined the Trades Union, and refused to re-employ them unless they renounced membership. The Union soon found itself hard pressed for funds to support its members who were striking or locked out.

But now came a further blow. The arrest and conviction of the Tolpuddle Martyrs for 'administering unlawful oaths'—i.e. for using a ceremony of initiation on enrolling new members in the Union—constituted a threat to every person who joined it or worked for it. Under the double pressure of this threat from the law and the

constant levies for the support of strikes and lock-outs, members began to drop away. Seeing the position to be hopeless, Owen in the summer of 1834 dissolved the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, and therewith dropped right out of the Trade Union movement, and retired to his advocacy of model Villages of Co-operation, which were to be the pioneers of the new social order. The collapse of the G.N.C.T.U. carried with it that of the Equitable Labour Exchanges and the Union Shops which had used them for marketing their produce. Some of the consumers' Co-operative Stores survived; but Owen ceased to have any connection with them. The great wave of Trade Union activity which had followed hard upon the Reform Act was at an end. The Radical workers were swept back into political activity under Chartist leadership: the hope of speedily transforming society to a Socialist system by Trade Union action was given up.

THE RISE OF THE CRAFT UNIONS

THE DISSOLUTION OF the G.N.C.T.U. did not, however, involve the disappearance of the societies of which it had been composed. Trade Unionism had suffered a very severe blow, and there was a heavy loss of membership. Many societies broke up altogether, and in many cases the local Trade Clubs which had been drawn together into national associations fell apart again, and maintained a purely local existence. The Builders' Union divided into separate craft societies, the stonemasons and carpenters forming national craft Unions, whereas the other trades returned to purely local clubs. What had remained of Doherty's National Association broke up finally into its component parts.

But before long, even while Chartism occupied the centre of working-class attention, Trade Unionism began again to grow. The miners, under the leadership of Martin Jude, organised their first National Union in the 'forties; and the Spinners, Potters, Stonemasons, and other craft groups maintained a nearly continuous activity. Meanwhile, the continued advance of machinery was conferring more and more importance upon the machine-makers. A number of societies of Steam-Engine Makers and other classes of mechanics had been formed in the 'twenties; and by the 'forties one society, the Journeymen Steam-Engine Makers, had outdistanced the others and could make some claim to be called a national body.

In 1850-1 the J.S.E.M. swallowed a number of its smaller rivals, and became the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, with the aim of bringing together all the

skilled mechanics in the engineering crafts. This aim was never realised; for many craftsmen preferred to retain separate societies of their own. But the A.S.E. speedily became the leading national craft Union, and came to be regarded as a 'new model' of Trade Union organisation which other groups imitated as the local clubs drew together into national Unions.

The essential feature of this 'new model' was centralisation of control. In the A.S.E. the funds were to belong not to the branches, but to the central body; for, though most of the money was actually kept in the branches in order to avoid confiding any large sum to one person, the balances were re-divided annually among all the branches on a basis of membership, and the central executive could at any time make a call on the funds in the branches' hands. All strike action required central sanction, and no benefits could be paid out save with the executive's approval. Contributions were high, and a wide range of friendly benefits was provided—for unemployment, sickness and superannuation, as well as in case of trade disputes. All funds were pooled, without earmarking for any particular benefit; and this partly explains the peculiarly careful policy which was followed almost from the start. Anxious to conserve the funds for payment of friendly benefits, the Union leaders, especially William Allan, the general secretary, did their utmost to discourage strikes and to settle differences by peaceful negotiation. This was the easier to do, because the demand for skilled engineering labour was expanding very fast, with the development of the factory system and of mechanised forms of transport.

Nevertheless, the A.S.E. began its career with a great strike and lock-out; for the employers, unwilling to recognise the power of the new Union, attempted to smash it before it could become securely established. In 1852 the employers in London and Lancashire locked out all members of the A.S.E. and demanded that they should sign a 'document' renouncing membership. Despite the

help given by the Christian Socialists and other middle-class sympathisers, in the end the men had to sign the 'document'. But they did not in fact regard as binding a signature obtained under duress; and within a year or two the A.S.E. was stronger than ever.

In the 'fifties Trade Unionism was growing fast in many industries. The chief exception was coal-mining; for Jude's National Association fell to pieces about 1850, and the new national body created by Alexander Macdonald, the Scottish miners' leader, was not effectively organised until 1863. On the other hand, Trade Unionism developed rapidly in the cotton, printing, metal-working and building industries. Modern Trade Unionism in the cotton industry especially took shape largely in the 'fifties, when a beginning was made with the system of collective bargaining based on standard lists of piecework prices agreed to by the employers and the Unions so as to be operative over a number of towns and factory villages.

The next big landmark in Trade Union history is the London building dispute of 1859, in which once more the employers presented the 'document' requiring renunciation of Trade Union membership. Apart from the stonemasons, who had a strong national Union, the London builders were organised mainly in small local clubs; but they all drew together in a Joint Committee for the purposes of the dispute, under the leadership of George Potter. The other London trades, regarding the 'document' as a serious menace to the entire movement, formed a joint committee to support the builders; and when the dispute had ended as a drawn battle—the men neither signing the 'document' nor gaining their demands—this latter body decided to become permanent, as the London Trades Council.

The L.T.C. was by no means the first Trades Council, or permanent joint council open to all the Trade Unions and branches in a particular area. The Liverpool and Glasgow Trades Councils both have longer continuous histories than that of London; and Trades Committees had been formed and had remained in existence for

substantial periods in various towns at any rate from 1818 onwards. But in the absence of any effective national body representing the Trade Unions as a whole, the London Trades Council at once acquired a position of special importance. It took the leading part in lobbying Members of Parliament when legislation affecting the workers was in question; and it was constantly being appealed to by Trade Unions all over the country to organise financial help when they became involved in trade disputes.

(A second outcome of the London building dispute was the spread of the 'new model' type of Trade Unionism into the building trades. Robert Applegarth, realising the weakness of the decentralised local clubs in which most building workers were organised, created the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners in 1861, on much the same basis as the A.S.E. had been created a decade earlier. The existing General Union of Carpenters and Joiners, which had survived from the Owenite days but had sunk greatly in membership, refused to join the new body, and remained separate well into the present century. But attempts were soon made to create 'new model' Unions in other building crafts; and in the metal industries many societies which had been little more than loosely federated bodies re-drafted their constitutions broadly on the lines of the A.S.E. and the A.S.C. & J.)

(I have said that there was in the 'fifties and 'sixties no national body effectively representing the Trade Union movement as a whole.) This was not for want of trying. As early as 1845 a renewed attempt had been made to bring all the Trade Unions together again into a single body. In that year a conference had founded the National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour, thus reviving the name as well as the idea of John Doherty's Association of 1830. Moreover, side by side with the N.A.U.T.P.L., the same conference set up a National Association of United Trades for the Employment of Labour, with the function of promoting the establishment of Co-operative 'Union Shops' for production under Trade

Union control. This showed that Owenite ideas persisted in the movement, despite Owen's formal withdrawal from the leadership; but the N.A.U.T.E.L. speedily faded out in the great commercial crisis of 1846-7. The N.A.U.T.P.L., however, lived on, though it lost much of its strength. It remained alive through the 'fifties and most of the 'sixties, with a dwindling membership. It was largely responsible, in 1859, for securing the Act which legalised peaceful picketing,¹ and its best-known later activity was in connection with the Conciliation Act of 1867, under which the Board of Trade was first authorised to intervene for the purpose of promoting an agreed settlement of trade disputes. It had, however, long before this ceased to have any claim to be regarded as a really representative body.

The next step towards creating a central means of expression for the movement as a whole was taken in 1864, when Alexander Macdonald, the miners' leader, and Alexander Campbell, the secretary of the Glasgow Trades Council, called a National Trade Union Conference to consider the urgent need for an amendment of the Master and Servant Acts, under which hundreds of men, chiefly miners, were being sent to prison every year for breach of contract. This conference, which led up to the Master and Servant Act of 1867, was followed by another in 1868, and at this gathering yet another effort was made to create an effective central organisation by founding the United Kingdom Alliance of Organised Trades.

The idea behind the U.K.A.O.T. was somewhat different from that which had inspired earlier attempts at 'General Unions'. The new body was to be open only to societies which were already organised on a considerable scale, local Trade Clubs and small Unions being excluded, until they chose to merge themselves in larger societies. The 'organised trades', thus united into a central alliance, were to make contributions to a fund upon which they would be entitled to draw whenever they became involved in disputes owing to the employers endeavouring to lower

¹ See pages 115-6.

wages or worsen conditions of labour. The Alliance was thus meant to be purely a defensive body; and its creation was in fact prompted by the repeated lock-outs to which the workers had been subjected during the previous few years.

At the outset, quite a number of societies joined the Alliance. But before long they began to drop away; and although it lived on for some years, until the boom of the early 'seventies had set the Unions thinking much more about winning advances than about resisting reductions, it never established itself on a national scale. The function of representing the movement as a whole passed instead to the Trades Union Congress, which became established as a regular annual gathering from 1868, with a Parliamentary Committee to carry on necessary activities between the annual Congresses. The T.U.C., however, did not become fully representative until after 1871, when the 'new model' Trade Unions, hitherto not much disposed to take it seriously, at length joined forces with the miners and factory operatives of the North, who had until then been its principal supporters.

The story connects closely at this point with the struggle for legal recognition in which the Trade Unions were engaged between 1867 and 1875.¹ When the threat to Trade Unionism became formidable and a Royal Commission was set up to enquire into their doings, the 'new model' Unions, anxious to keep the more militant aspects of the movement in the background and to direct attention to their own moderate policies, had no wish to collaborate with the main body of Trade Unionists in presenting their case. Accordingly, instead of throwing in their lot with the northern Trade Unions, they created a special body of their own—the Conference of Amalgamated Trades—and succeeded in elbowing out of the way the special Committee which the main body of the Trade Unions had appointed to conduct the defence. When, however, these tactics had resulted in the unwelcome Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871,² it became plain that united

¹ See pages 116 ff.

² See page 117.

pressure from the whole movement would be needed in order to ensure the repeal of the obnoxious statute; and the 'new model' Unions accordingly dissolved the Conference of Amalgamated Trades, and set out to capture the Northern Trade Unions for their own point of view. Thus united, the movement was able to secure the improved Trade Union legislation of 1875-6.

These events followed hard upon the Reform Act of 1867, which had given the Parliamentary vote to the working-class householders in the towns, though it was still denied to the agricultural labourers and to the main body of the miners, who lived chiefly outside the urban areas. The Trade Unions, which had agitated hard for Reform through the National Reform League, followed up this success by forming in 1869 the Labour Representation League, to secure the return of working-class candidates to Parliament. In 1874 the L.R.L. secured the election of two workmen, both miners—Alexander Macdonald for Stafford and Thomas Burt for Morpeth.

But the effect of the enfranchisement of a large body of working-class voters was seen chiefly, not in this electoral success, but in the bidding of both Liberals and Conservatives for working-class support by the passing of social legislation. Between 1867 and 1875, in addition to giving the Trade Unions legal recognition and amending the law of master and servant, Parliament greatly extended the scope of factory regulation, passed important Acts for the protection of miners and merchant seamen, set on foot a general system of public elementary education, gave local authorities power to demolish slum-dwellings and provide working-class houses, established a general system of public health organisation throughout the country, and, in short, enacted in less than a decade an immense mass of useful social laws for which reformers had been pleading vainly for more than a generation.

In the meantime, industry had been passing through a prodigious boom. The years 1872 and 1873 saw British exports rise to unexampled heights; and in all industries

there were very high profits and labour was in brisk request. Trade Unionism, almost confined since the collapse of 1834 to miners, textile operatives, and skilled workers in crafts recruited by a prolonged apprenticeship, spread rapidly among the less skilled workers. Joseph Arch organised the agricultural labourers: the London gas-stokers formed a Union which speedily found itself in conflict with the law: Trade Unions began to appear among groups hitherto wholly unorganised, such as the railway workers. The engineers and shipbuilders on the North-East Coast struck for a nine-hours day, and won it, in a strike involving Trade Unionists and non-Unionists together; and conducted by an unofficial committee, with little or no support from the official leadership of the A.S.E. Engineers in other areas, and builders also, quickly followed the example of the Tyneside workers; and the Nine-Hours Day was successfully established in these industries over a large part of the country. Despite the shackles of the Act in 1871 the Trade Union movement seemed to be well set for a victorious advance all along the line.

But these successes did not last. Trade began to worsen in 1874, and in the following years severe depression hit one industry after another. The miners, who were the first to feel the brunt of the depression, went down to defeat in a series of county strikes against wage-reductions; and their national movement began to break up. The agricultural labourers' Unions went under in the great agricultural depression of the later 'seventies. The Trade Union movement, on the morrow of its great expansion, shrank up again to a size hardly greater than it had reached ten years or so before.

From the middle 'seventies to the middle 'nineties, prices fell almost continuously; and during most of this period the Trade Unions were forced back to a purely defensive policy. The miners, defeated in their attempts to maintain wages, were compelled in most areas to accept sliding scales under which wages varied with the price of coal. In other industries wages were heavily cut down;

but in most cases the cost of living fell fast enough for those workers who remained in full employment to find their purchasing power actually rising, despite the reductions in money wages. In general, the militancy of the early 'seventies was soon forgotten; and Trade Unionism, now definitely under the leadership of the 'new model' Unions, became essentially moderate and defensive. Attempts to organise the less skilled workers practically ceased: the Trade Unions were content with holding on to the groups which possessed a strong organisation, without any attempt to bring in sections whose members could not afford the high contributions which could be exacted from the relatively well-paid fraternities of skilled craftsmen.

THE NEW UNIONISM

(T)RADE UNIONISM REMAINED within these narrow limits, and in this sombre mood, until the late 'eighties. As the original leaders of the 'new model' Unions dropped away, new men, such as J. D. Prior of the Carpenters, George Howell of the Bricklayers, and Henry Broadhurst of the Stonemasons, took their places, and followed the same policies, even in an exaggerated form. Strikes were taboo; everything was to be settled by conciliation or by impartial arbitration where the two sides failed to agree. Craft Unions which had hitherto taken up a more militant attitude came more and more to adopt the policies and methods of the 'new model' Unions. The miners largely adopted similar methods after the collapse of their national association, and accepted a system under which wages varied automatically with the price of coal under a 'sliding scale'.

Meanwhile, under the stimulus of trade depression, small groups of workmen began to think along more militant lines. In 1881 Henry Mayers Hyndman founded the Democratic Federation, which became the Social Democratic Federation three years later, and adopted a policy and programme of Marxian Socialism. In the severe slump of the middle 'eighties, the Socialists took the lead in organising the unemployed for mass demonstrations and marches, and these soon involved conflicts with the police and a struggle, in which the Radicals joined, to preserve the right of public meeting in Trafalgar Square and of proceeding through the streets upon unemployed marches and the like.

As trade improved from 1887 onwards there came a stirring among the less skilled workers. Ben Tillet began organising the London dockers in 1887; and shortly afterwards Annie Besant, by exposing the grievances of the match-girls, brought about the first uprising of the less skilled workers since the early 'seventies. The match-girls struck, and won—much to everyone's surprise; and their victory gave a stimulus to organisation in other trades.

Meanwhile, in 1888 the miners drew together in a new national body—the Miners' Federation of Great Britain—on a programme of sharp opposition to the 'sliding scale'. No district Miners' Union was to be admitted to the M.F.G.B. unless it pledged itself to terminate the sliding scale, and thus free its hands for the struggle for improved wages and conditions.

In the following year a further stage was reached. Will Thorne organised the London gasworkers, who struck and won a remarkable victory. The dockers came out, led by Ben Tillet, Tom Mann, and John Burns; and after a great strike, through which extensive public subscriptions made it possible for the men to hold out, the 'docker's tanner' was won, and the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union created, with Ben Tillet as secretary. In a single year the membership of the Trade Unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress leapt up from 687,000 to 1,593,000. This was to some extent a mushroom growth; and membership sank to 1,094,000 in the following year. But a substantial part of the increase remained even through the ensuing years of depression.

In effect, the year 1889 began a new period in Trade Union history. The less skilled workers had made some attempt to organise during the boom of the early 'seventies; but the subsequent depression had swept their efforts away. In 1889, however, thanks partly to conscious Socialist leadership, the new Unions were able to establish themselves securely side by side with the Unions of more highly skilled workers, though for some time the older

leaders continued confidently to predict their disappearance. George Howell, for example, the bricklayer who was one of the early secretaries of the T.U.C., argued that it was impossible for a Trade Union to maintain itself through periods of depression without friendly benefits to hold the members together; and, as the members of the new Unions could only afford a few pence a week—barely enough to pay for organisation and to finance an occasional strike, without anything to spare for sickness or unemployment or old age, he simply refused to believe that they would outlast the wave of excitement which had called them into being.

This view was wrong; but wrong also were the Socialists who hoped for a speedy conversion of the whole Trade Union movement to a militant Socialist policy. As the boom passed, and the opportunities for securing wage advances disappeared, the membership of the new Unions fell off sharply, and the older Unions, which had been led for the time being to adopt a more aggressive policy, relapsed to their old attitude. The Miners' Federation, indeed, was successful over most of the country in breaking the sliding-scale system; and the great miners' strike of 1893 resulted in the establishment of a uniform system of collective bargaining over most of the English coal-fields, except those of the North-East. But after the passing of the boom the struggle became in general rather political than industrial. The Independent Labour Party, founded under Keir Hardie's leadership in 1893, strove to bring the Trade Unions over to a policy of independent political action with a view to an improvement of conditions by Act of Parliament. The I.L.P. stood ultimately for Socialism; but the chief planks in its programme were the legal eight-hours day, the legal minimum wage, and the 'right to work'—that is, the public provision of work or maintenance at a decent living standard for the unemployed.

All through the 'nineties Keir Hardie and his followers were trying to persuade the Trades Union Congress to

express a faith in Socialism, to adopt the I.L.P.'s immediate programme of social legislation, and to set up a Labour Party based directly on an alliance between the Trade Union movement and the Socialist bodies. At the same time the Trade Union left wing, with the support of Robert Blatchford and *The Clarion*, the best and most influential working-class journal of the period, was pressing for closer unity in the industrial field.

Gradually these efforts produced results. In 1899 the Trades Union Congress was persuaded to establish the General Federation of Trade Unions, on lines somewhat similar to those of the Alliance of Organised Trades which had been set up in 1866, except that the G.F.T.U. was meant for offensive as well as defensive action. Any Trade Union which joined it was to pay contributions on a basis of membership on one of two scales, designed for richer and poorer societies, and was to be entitled to draw upon the central fund at a proportional rate to supplement its own resources in case of a strike or lock-out involving any of its members. The T.U.C. created the G.F.T.U. as a quite independent body, in preference to establishing a central fund of its own. It was open to each Union to join, or refrain from joining, the new body, just as it thought fit; and in the event many of the larger Unions, including the Miners, held aloof. The G.F.T.U. became, in fact, no more than a sort of central strike insurance society for a number of Trade Unions. It quite failed to fulfil the hope once entertained of it that it would serve as a rallying point for a militant policy of industrial unionism.

The year following the creation of the G.F.T.U. brought with it similar action in the political sphere. Just as the Trades Union Congress had set up the G.F.T.U. as a separate body, which its affiliated Trade Unions were free to join or to let alone, so in 1900 it set up the Labour Representation Committee. The Socialists had asked for a Labour Party, to be fully independent of other parties and fully committed to a Socialist policy. They

secured much less than this; for the L.R.C. was neither definitely a party, nor definitely committed to Socialism. It was, however, pledged to independence of other parties; and the Socialists were strong enough to secure that its Conferences should pass Socialist resolutions, and, in 1903, that it should become affiliated to the International Socialist Bureau which had been set up in 1900, and thus take its place in international conferences side by side with the Social Democratic Parties of the continental countries. But not until 1906 did the L.R.C. definitely accept the position of constituting a fully independent party in Parliament, with a complete programme of its own. The Labour Party, as a fully-constituted third party in the House of Commons, dates only from the General Election of 1906; and even then it would hardly have come into being, or at any rate would hardly have commanded the support of most of the larger Trade Unions, but for the threat to the very foundations of Trade Unionism involved in the Taff Vale Judgment of 1901.¹

¹ See page 120.

THE GREAT UNREST

UP TO 1906, when the Trade Disputes Act became law, industrial action was paralysed by the Taff Vale Judgment. Thereafter, in face of rising prices and rapidly increasing capitalist profits, industrial unrest developed apace. But the leaders of the Labour Party frowned upon strikes, and endeavoured to persuade the workers that their hopes should be set rather upon industrial and social reforms to be secured by legislation. Up to 1910 this attitude appeared to have some justification. The Liberal Government, with Labour support, followed up the Trade Disputes Act by the Acts establishing Old Age Pensions, Trade Boards for a number of sweated trades, and an improved system of Workmen's Compensation. Small holdings were extended, and a new Housing Act, the first to provide for any sort of town planning, was placed on the statute book, though little enough was done to give practical effect to its provisions. School medical inspection was instituted; and school meals were made available, on a small scale, for necessitous children: the miners secured both an Eight-Hours Act and a considerably improved system of coal-mines inspection and a new safety code. Employment Exchanges were provided all over the country, in order to improve the mobility of labour; and promises were made that the problem of unemployment would speedily be taken in hand. The Government, however, entirely refused to accept the 'Right to Work' Bill, which the Labour Party introduced year after year.

In 1909 Mr. Lloyd George introduced his 'Henroost' Budget, imposing special taxes on land values. When this

was thrown out by the House of Lords, there ensued the struggle which, after two General Elections in a single year (1910), ended in the passing of the Parliament Act of 1911. This took away the Lords' power to alter Money Bills, and restricted their power over other Bills to a suspensory veto for three years. The elections of 1910 seriously reduced the Liberal majority, and made the Government dependent on Irish and Labour votes. The Labour Party, practically unchanged in numbers apart from the addition of the Miners' members, who had joined it after the Osborne Judgment in 1909,¹ now found that its support was essential to keep the Government in office. Mr. Lloyd George in 1911 produced his Insurance Bill, which provided for the establishment of a general system of Health Insurance, to be paid for mainly by contributions from employers and workers, with only a small subsidy from public funds. To this health insurance scheme was tacked an experimental scheme of unemployment insurance on similar lines, compulsorily applicable only to a few industries, but including an additional clause under which the State could pay subventions in aid of the unemployment benefits provided by Trade Unions for their members in any industry.

These proposals raised a great deal of controversy. Socialists had demanded State maintenance in default of work at a living wage for the unemployed, on a non-contributory basis; and a plan for providing maintenance had been just put forward by Mrs. Sidney Webb and George Lansbury in the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission (1909). But the Liberals would have none of this. They insisted on a contributory scheme, under which employers would be entitled to deduct the workman's contributions from his weekly wages. This system of compulsory deductions from wages, which applied to both health and unemployment insurance, was roundly denounced by the Socialists as involving the 'Servile State'; and it was argued that in effect the workmen would have

¹ See page 121.

to pay the employers' contributions as well as their own, because the employers would reduce wages in order to meet the charge, or at any rate would take it out of the next increase in wages demanded of them. But most of the Trade Union leaders did not take this view; for the scheme made provision for the Trade Unions, where they so desired, to undertake the administration of both health and unemployment insurance on behalf of their members, and to receive from the State a sum calculated to cover their administration costs. This 'recognition' of Trade Unionism attracted the leaders, who also hoped that the scheme would help them to gain additional members. Consequently, the Labour Party as a whole did not oppose the Insurance Bill, though some of its Socialist members did. The new principle of enacting social reforms which were to be paid for mainly, not by taxing the rich, but by levying contributions on the workers themselves was placed on the statute book with the support of the majority of Trade Union members of Parliament.

By this time, however, the continued rise in the cost of living, without any corresponding rise in wage-rates, was causing an uncontrollable movement of labour unrest. The railwaymen had advanced an 'all-grades' programme' in 1907, including both advances upon their exceedingly low wages and recognition of their Unions, with which the railway companies still entirely refused to deal. They were bought off on this occasion by the establishment, under Mr. Lloyd George's influence, of a system of Conciliation Boards, from which all Trade Union full-time officials were excluded, only actual servants of the companies, elected by ballot of the whole body of workers in the separate grades, being eligible to sit. Thus, no recognition was given to the Trade Unions; and in practice the machinery of the Boards was soon found to admit of so much delay and evasion as to be almost worthless. In 1911, therefore, the railway Unions came forward with a new 'all-grades' programme, and, when the railway

companies still refused recognition, called the first national railway strike.

Meanwhile the seamen and dockers had been on the move. Both these bodies of workers suffered from very low wages, made worse by casual or irregular employment. By 1911 the Unions of seamen and waterside and other transport workers, except the railwaymen, had drawn together in a National Transport Workers' Federation, under the leadership of Tom Mann. The seamen struck first; and the waterside workers soon followed, both in order to prevent ships from sailing with blackleg labour, and in furtherance of their own demands. These troubles were in full swing when the railwaymen, faced with the rejection of their national programme, also came out on strike.

In all cases the workers won substantial victories. The railwaymen secured a new Conciliation Scheme under which, though direct recognition of the Trade Unions was still refused, Trade Union officials were allowed to be chosen as secretaries of the Conciliation Boards, and the entire procedure was improved and greatly speeded up. The seamen and waterside workers secured considerable wage-concessions, varying from port to port, and also recognition of their Unions and of the right of collective bargaining. In some areas, notably Liverpool, the strikes had taken for a time a strongly militant form, and there had been serious clashes with the police, arising out of the strikers' refusal to allow blackleg lorries to pass through the streets, or ships to be loaded by blackleg labour. But the strength of Trade Union feeling was such that both the employers and the Government saw the need to give way.

In the following year the Miners' Federation called a national mining strike. For some years before this there had been an increasing number of local mining strikes, on a variety of issues. The South Wales miners, by striking at one pit after another against the employment of non-unionists, had been gradually creating a blackleg-proof organisation. In 1909-10, there had been strikes in Durham

and Yorkshire against the adoption of the three-shift scheme of working after the passing of the Coal Mines Eight Hours Act; and in 1911 the South Wales Miners' Federation had become involved in a large-scale struggle with the powerful Cambrian Combine—a struggle which was still in progress when it merged into the national conflict of 1912.

The miners failed to secure by their national stoppage the full concessions for which they asked. They had set out to win a national minimum wage and the establishment of a national system of negotiation for all the coalfields. Instead, they had to accept the unsatisfactory compromise of the Coal Mines Minimum Wage Act, which is described in a subsequent chapter.¹ Nor did the other great strike of 1912 repeat the successes of the previous year; for when the London transport workers came out again with a demand for full recognition of their Federation, and appealed to the rest of the country for support, they were driven back to work on unfavourable terms in face of the determined opposition of the Port of London Authority. Smaller strikes, however, were numerous, and met with better success; and many wage advances were granted without a stoppage.

The strike wave continued into 1913; but at this point attention was diverted from Great Britain to Ireland, where a tremendous conflict broke out between the Dublin employers and the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, headed by James Larkin and James Connolly. Larkin's policy had been that of organising many trades in one big Union, and using the sympathetic strike, especially in the form of a refusal of the transport workers to handle 'tainted goods', as a means of securing concessions. This policy had already brought him into conflict, not only with the employers, but also with the leaders of the British Trade Unions which had branches in Ireland. Consequently, when the Dublin employers declared war on the Irish Transport Union, and refused recognition, Larkin's appeal for help to the British leaders met with

¹ See page 111.

no ready response. Larkin wanted the railwaymen and seamen to boycott goods consigned to Dublin, and so to establish a blockade of the city. The British leaders would have none of this; but, as the Dublin employers were challenging the very right to belong to a Trade Union, they could not stand altogether aloof. Moreover, the militant sections in Great Britain vigorously demanded that every possible help should be given to the Dublin strikers; and Larkin himself aroused vast enthusiasm when he toured Great Britain to collect money and call for help. The Dublin strike finally ended in what was virtually a drawn battle; but while it lasted, it became a symbolic issue between moderates and militants in the British Trade Union movement.

Indeed, behind all the industrial unrest of the years immediately before the war there was a continual clash between rival policies and philosophies. The Trade Union 'Left', drawing its inspiration partly from the Industrial Workers of the World and partly from the Revolutionary Syndicalism of France, denounced the compromising policies of the Trade Unions and the Labour Party, and called for a thorough reorganisation of the Trade Union movement on a basis of Industrial Unionism. The workers, they urged, should not wait upon the politicians, but should make themselves strong enough to secure their demands by industrial action. Despite the Labour Party and the Trade Unions, real wages had been falling, and the owners of capital were being allowed to amass enormous profits. It was argued that by organising on a basis of class instead of craft, and by making full use of the strike weapon, the Unions could speedily bring over the entire working class to a policy of social revolution.

Some successes in the way of Trade Union reorganisation were won by the Left. Three of the five railway Unions combined in 1913 to form the National Union of Railwaymen on an industrial basis; and in the following year the N.U.R., the Transport Workers' Federation, and the Miners' Federation made plans for uniting their forces in

a Triple Industrial Alliance which was to put forward joint demands backed by the threat of a simultaneous strike of all three groups. But before the Alliance had been fully consummated Great Britain was at war, and the movement was under the necessity of taking up its attitude in face of a radically new situation.

TRADE UNIONISM IN WAR-TIME

WHEN WAR BROKE out in August 1914 the British Trade Unions immediately agreed to an 'industrial truce'. Strikes which were actually in progress were called off; and many big Unions which were on the point of coming forward with demands agreed to postpone their claims until the war was over. At that stage, few expected the struggle to go on for years, or had any anticipation of its economic effects. At the outset unemployment increased owing to the dislocation of peace-time industries, and though many men enlisted there was no sign of any shortage of labour.

But within a few months labour shortage had become acute in the munitions industries. In March 1915, under the Treasury Agreements, the Trade Unions accepted in principle the 'dilution of labour' by the substitution of unskilled for skilled workers, and the temporary suspension of Trade Union customs while the war lasted. In the summer these concessions were made obligatory by the Munitions of War Act, 1915, which also prohibited strikes in the war industries and established compulsory arbitration in trade disputes. The Act also gave effect to the promise made to the Unions to limit profits in return for their acceptance of dilution; but the standard of profit allowed was so high that employers were still able to realise enormous sums.

In March 1916 the Government imposed military conscription upon single men; and soon afterwards married men as well were brought in. Although pledges had been given against 'industrial conscription', the existence of

compulsory military service radically altered the situation in the workshops; for every man of military age retained in industry had now to carry an exemption card, and this could be cancelled if he made himself a nuisance to the authorities. Moreover, a system of 'leaving certificates', designed to prevent men from moving from job to job in search of better conditions, greatly restricted the workers' freedom; and presently, when wounded men or others unsuitable for service at the front began to be returned to the workshops, they were not released from the army, but sent back as 'Army Reserve Munition Workers', still liable to recall.

The conditions would have robbed the workers of all freedom of action, had it not been for the extreme scarcity of skilled labour. But this scarcity, in view of the impossibility of allowing work on munitions to suffer serious interruption, put the skilled men in a strong position, as long as they acted together to protect one another from victimisation. The South Wales miners showed their strength in 1915, when they struck in defiance of the Munitions Act and, instead of being punished, won practically the whole of their claims.

There were, however, in general, few strikes during the war years; and most of them were 'unofficial', i.e., unsupported by the Trade Unions as such. This was partly because the official Trade Union leadership, like the Labour Party which reflected its attitude, supported the war and was pledged to maintain the industrial truce. But it was also because the Munitions of War Acts made strikes in the munitions industries unlawful, and the leaders were afraid of jeopardising Trade Union funds and perhaps their own positions if they countenanced them. Consequently, the lead had to be taken by unofficial movements. In the munitions industries there grew up in almost every important establishment a group of unofficial 'shop stewards'. First on the Clyde, and later in many other centres, the shop stewards from the various establishments drew together into Shop Stewards' Committees, or 'Workers'

Committees', as they came to be called, after the Clyde Workers' Committee, which was the head and forefront of the movement. These Workers' Committees were for the most part under left-wing leadership. At the outset, their principal function was to agitate for improved wages to meet the rapidly rising cost of living, and to protect the workers' interests where schemes of 'labour dilution' were being carried out. But later, as the pressure to secure additional men for military service became more intense, the Workers' Committees also helped to protect their members from indiscriminate 'comb-outs' by the military authorities.

In the early stages of the war, the workers' most urgent grievances arose out of the rising cost of living. Wages lagged behind prices, because of the industrial truce; and soon the position threatened to become intolerable. The Government had to recognise the need for concessions; and first the railwaymen and then many other bodies of workers received 'war bonuses', which were seldom, however, adequate, apart from the increased piecework and overtime earnings, to compensate for the rise in prices. When compulsory arbitration had been introduced, there was less trouble over general wage-questions, and the emphasis shifted to the conditions of 'dilution' and war-time maladjustment in each separate district or factory. The unofficial movements were thus, right up to 1917, concerned chiefly with economic questions.

But from the beginning of 1917, and especially from the first Russian Revolution, the rank and file movement among the workers became increasingly political. Instead of the 'fight to a finish' proclaimed by the war-mongers, more and more of the workers wanted 'peace by negotiation'. There was growing anti-war feeling in the workshops, accentuated by the increasingly drastic 'comb-outs'. There was a spreading knowledge of the contents of secret treaties, and of the divergence between the proclaimed and actual 'war aims' of the Allied Powers. The Russians were now agitating for a negotiated peace; and the British

Government's rejection of all attempts at a settlement, its hostility to the proposed Stockholm Conference of the world Socialist movement, and its treatment of Arthur Henderson, the leading Labour minister in the Lloyd George Coalition Government, combined to spread the feeling for peace far beyond the unofficial rank and file movements of the extreme Left. Henderson resigned from the Cabinet in 1917; but the Labour Party replaced him by another minister, and right up to the armistice of 1918 Labour continued to be represented in the Coalition Government.

Politically, the rallying point for the anti-war forces was the Independent Labour Party, led by Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden. The I.L.P., which had been affiliated to the Labour Party since its foundation, did not leave it in 1914; but throughout the war, while remaining inside the Labour Party, it pursued a policy of its own, demanding a negotiated peace and exposing the imperialist tendencies of British and Allied war aims. But the I.L.P., though it was anti-war, was never a party of the extreme Left. It was pacifist rather than revolutionary, and during the war there rallied to it many pacifists who were hardly Socialists at all. To the left of it there were small, more extreme bodies, such as the British Socialist Party, which was the anti-war majority of the old Social Democratic Federation under a new name, and the Socialist Labour Party, which had its strength chiefly upon the Clyde. These two bodies combined after the war, with certain smaller groups, to form the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Politically, the extreme Left was very weak during the war years. In effect, the real leadership of the extreme Left was industrial—in the Shop Stewards and Workers' Committees. These were in continuous conflict, not only with the Government, but also with the official Trade Union leaders, who accused them of seeking to usurp control of the British Trade Union movement and of perverting it to political ends. The policy of the Government during the

war was to give as much recognition as possible to the official Trade Union leaders, by placing them on countless committees, and consulting them on a vast number of issues. This had the effect of making the Trade Unions to a considerable extent the agents of Government policies, and of disabling them from pursuing a militant policy of their own. Mostly supporters of the war, the official leaders denounced the rival leaders of the shop stewards and other rank and file movements as unpatriotic, and tried to prevent the Government and the employers from giving them any sort of recognition. But in practice the shop stewards and other rank and file leaders often gained so great an ascendancy over the workers that on a number of occasions both the employers and the Government had to negotiate with them, and the official Trade Union leaders were also compelled to recognise their existence.

In the later stages of the war, Government control did a good deal to check the further rise of the cost of living; and unrest thereupon took increasingly a political form. Nerves were strained near to breaking point by continuous overwork; and a half-revolutionary temper developed fast. But there were no large-scale outbreaks while the war lasted; and when it ended in November 1918 the Government was able, by paying out large doles and by making still larger promises, to get through the critical months of demobilisation and transfer of industry to a peace footing without revolutionary opposition from the workers.

TRADE UNIONISM AFTER THE WAR

MEANWHILE, WAR CONDITIONS had brought to the Trade Union movement a quite new recognition at the hands of the State. Trade Union leaders not only took part in the Government under the successive Coalitions responsible for the conduct of the war: they were also admitted to a share in many of the control schemes which were set up for one industry after another under pressure of war needs. The Trade Unions began to think of themselves as having a claim to share in the 'control of industry', and to put forward plans for making this control permanent, in peace as well as war. 'Workers' Control' had been already, in the years of labour unrest before the war, a slogan of Syndicalists, Guild Socialists, and Trade Union militants. But now the cry was taken up by others, and, as long as the war lasted, the shortage of labour enabled the Trade Union representatives to exercise some degree of real control.

But the 'control of industry' could mean many things. Syndicalists meant by it the overthrow of capitalist society by working-class action, and the taking over by the workers of the entire responsibility for production. Guild Socialists meant a similar overthrow of capitalism, to be followed by a partnership in industrial control between the workers and a Socialist State. Most Trade Union leaders meant no more than a right for the Unions to share in the formulation of industrial policy, and to sit on the controlling boards of the various industries as they were brought under public ownership or regulation.

By way of answer to these demands for 'workers' control', advocates of capitalism soon put forward a set of alternative

proposals—for they were scared enough not to meet the demands with a blank negative. The once-famous Whitley Committee was set up with instructions to devise a plan, not for superseding capitalism, but for improving the relations between employers and workers; and in 1917 it recommended that in each organised industry there should be set up a Joint Industrial Council, equally representing the two parties, to deal with all matters affecting the industry which they were prepared to discuss. As these Councils could do nothing except by agreement between the two sides, and as the employers still maintained intact their ownership of industry and their power to dismiss, give orders, promote, and retain the surplus value created by labour just as before, it was plainly farcical to regard the Whitley Councils as conceding any part of the workers' demand for control. They were, however, so described, and were said to create a system of 'joint control' in which the workers would share. It was hoped that the Trade Unions would seize eagerly upon the 'recognition' which the Whitley scheme conceded to them, and that the more radical demands for real 'control of industry', involving the supersession of capitalism, would be quietly dropped.

At the close of hostilities, Whitley Councils were promptly brought into activity in a considerable number of industries. But many of the leading Trade Unions—including the miners, cotton-operatives and engineers—rejected the new plan, which speedily shrank to unimportance, and resulted in nothing more than some extension of the familiar methods of national collective bargaining to industries and services in which no national machinery had existed previously. The fundamental conflict between capital and labour remained entirely unaffected, as it was bound to do.

In the meantime the Government had been dealing very skilfully with the immediate dangers connected with the change-over from war to peace. Even before the war ended plans had been laid for speedy demobilisation

(for it was felt to be far too dangerous to hold the unwilling conscripts in the Army until there were jobs ready for them at home), and for the 'restoration of pre-war practices' in the various industries affected by labour dilution. Cash payments were made to soldiers on disbandment; and a temporary scheme of non-contributory unemployment pay was made available for both ex-soldiers and ex-munition workers. Wage-reductions were made unlawful for a year by the Wages Temporary Regulation Act at the same time as compulsory arbitration was withdrawn. State control over industry was given up wherever this could be done with safety; but it was retained for the time being at the obvious danger-points—the coal mines and the railways. Moreover, Mr. Lloyd George, by forcing an immediate General Election on the morrow of the Allied victory, succeeded in smashing the Liberal Opposition and in preventing the Labour Party, despite its reorganisation by Arthur Henderson in 1918 on a nationwide scale, from gaining more than a very few seats.

Secure in political power, Mr. Lloyd George was free to tackle the industrial danger. Naturally, every Trade Union was ready with a big programme of demands, partly for the consolidation of war-time bonuses and other concessions, and partly for new reforms, such as the eight-hour day in industry generally. The Government's strategy in this situation was to play for time, and to tackle each section as it came forward and compromise with it temporarily until the danger of general revolutionary action was over. Its most formidable antagonists were the Miners' Federation and the shop stewards' movement. But, after quick unofficial strikes on the Clyde and in Belfast, the power of the shop stewards speedily melted away as the munition shops disbanded their workers, often taking care to get rid of the most active agitators among the first batches of dismissals.

The miners, meanwhile, were demanding not only substantial wage advances and the six-hour day, but also public ownership of the mines, to be accompanied by

workers' control of the reorganised industry. The Government promptly appointed a Royal Commission under Lord Sankey to consider these claims; and this body side-tracked the agitation by producing an immediate report conceding wage advances and the seven-hour day (with a conditional promise of the six-hour day in a few years' time), but leaving the issues of public ownership and workers' control to be considered in a subsequent report. These concessions took the sting out of the miners' movement.

At the same time Mr. Lloyd George invited all the Trade Unions and employers' associations to a National Industrial Conference, which was to consider the future relations between Capital and Labour. The Joint Committee appointed by this gathering, which the miners, railwaymen, transport workers, and engineers refused to attend, presented agreed reports proposing a universal forty-eight-hour week, an extension of the minimum wage system, improved provision for the maintenance of the unemployed, and the establishment of a permanent Joint Council of employers and Trade Unionists to advise the Government on economic matters. But the details of all these measures of reform were left to be worked out later; and it presently became obvious that both the employers and the Government, though they had been ready to make large vague promises in face of the danger of revolutionary upheavals, were less and less disposed to implement these promises when the immediate danger seemed to be over, and the workers to be settling down again into the old routine of the wage system.

In the summer of 1919 there were indeed a number of important strikes. The railwaymen struck in support of their national programme, and won considerable concessions in respect of wage-rates and the grading of labour. Even the police carried through a successful strike. But by the autumn the most clamorous sections had been bought off, and the Government and employers were feeling strong enough to resist further claims. It remained,

however, to deal with the Miners' Federation. The Sankey Commission had failed to agree on the matter of public ownership. The six Labour representatives reported in favour of it, and the six capitalist representatives against, while the Chairman presented a special report in favour of it, but with some differences from the Labour point of view. The miners demanded that, a majority having favoured public ownership, the Government should nationalise the mines. But Mr. Lloyd George refused to do this, and put forward instead a proposal for district coal combines under private ownership, but with provision for workers' representation on the management. The miners thereupon called upon the entire Trade Union movement to help them in a strike for public ownership; but a special Trades Union Congress, called to consider this demand, decided instead on 'political' action in support of the miners' claims—which meant in effect doing nothing except holding a series of meetings. The miners did not feel strong enough to act alone; and thus, in effect, the campaign for public ownership lapsed.

In the following year, 1920, capitalist industry passed through a tremendous boom. Profits rose to an unexampled height, not because of high production, but because the urgent needs of post-war reconstruction made it possible to charge enormous prices. The boom was accompanied by a speculative fever. Businesses changed hands in hundreds at grossly inflated prices, based on the capitalisation of the enormous profits of the boom period. While these conditions lasted, wage increases were fairly easy to secure; and one Trade Union after another obtained concessions without strike action. Indeed, the chief industrial trouble of the year arose out of a political issue. During this period the capitalist Powers were still using every endeavour to 'help' the 'White' Russian counter-revolutionaries to smash the Soviet Republic. But a still more serious threat arose out of the Russo-Polish War, when British intervention seemed to be imminent on the Polish side. The dockers refused to load a ship, the *Jolly George*, consigned to Poland

with munitions; and so strong was the working-class feeling that the Trades Union Congress, acting in conjunction with the Labour Party, formed a Council of Action and threatened to order a General Strike unless the threat of British Intervention was withdrawn. It is difficult to be certain how seriously the British Government had meant to intervene. But certainly the formation of the Council of Action was effective. It was, in fact, the one occasion on which, throughout the period of 'post-war reconstruction', the British Labour movement managed to bring its forces solidly to bear. In doing so, it was acting as the spokesman of the vast majority of the people; for there was an overwhelming body of feeling against a renewal of European war.

By the end of 1920 the capitalist boom was beginning to collapse. In 1921 prices all over the world were coming down with a run, and wages were being everywhere reduced. The Government chose this moment to take off the coal-mines control and hand the mines back to the colliery owners, who thereupon announced drastic wage-reductions. The Miners' Federation, which had conducted a successful strike for an advance only a few months before, decided to resist, and called upon its partners in the Triple Industrial Alliance to make common cause with it by a simultaneous strike. But on 'Black Friday', April 5th, 1921, the two other bodies refused to strike, and the miners were left to fight alone and to suffer unavoidable defeat. This ignominious collapse of the Triple Alliance, and the subsequent defeat of the Miners' Federation, brought the strength of the Trade Union movement tumbling down. The period of post-war boom was definitely at an end. The wage system had been safely reinstated without substantial change; and the Trade Unions were by now in full retreat.

This phase lasted until 1923. The engineers were beaten in a big lock-out in 1922. Wages came sharply down in one industry after another. The workers attempted to regain by political action what they were no longer strong

enough to hold by their industrial power. In the General Election of 1923, fought by the Conservatives on the issue of Protection, the Labour Party gained many seats; and at the beginning of 1924 the first Labour Government took office, dependent for its majority on Liberal support in Parliament.

Meanwhile, industry had been reviving from the slump, and, in the special case of the miners, the occupation of the Ruhr by the French had caused a sharp rise in the price of coal. In 1924 the Miners' Federation was able to secure substantial wage increases, and wages rose to a smaller extent in a number of other industries. But this improvement was short-lived. The Labour Government fell before the year was out; and as soon as the Ruhr mines reopened after the acceptance of the Dawes Plan for reparations, coal prices began to fall. The miners had been granted their advances only for a single year; and when the restoration of the gold standard in 1925 further handicapped British exporters by raising the cost of British coal to foreign buyers, the coal-owners came forward with demands both for drastic wage-reductions and for the reintroduction of a longer working day.

Again, the Miners' Federation determined to resist. The Triple Alliance had perished in the fiasco of 1921; and the miners now appealed to the whole Trade Union movement. Urged on by the militants, the Trades Union Congress was induced to threaten a General Strike in their support; and the Baldwin Government, not ready to face such a movement, bought off the miners with a temporary subsidy in aid of wages—which incidentally was so arranged as to present large profits to the coal-owners. Another Royal Commission under Sir Herbert Samuel was appointed to consider the miners' claims; and while it was sitting the Government made its preparations for a fight to a finish as soon as the period of subsidy expired.

The Samuel Commission, from which all Socialist or working-class representatives had been excluded, reported against nationalisation of the mines, but in favour of

public ownership of the coal itself. It reported that some wage-reductions were necessary, and that these would have to be considerable unless the miners would agree to an increase in working hours. Its proposals for a compromise were rejected by both coal-owners and miners, and also by the Government unless the two parties would accept them. The miners thereupon called upon the Trades Union Congress to make good its promises of the previous year, and to declare a General Strike.

THE GENERAL STRIKE AND AFTER

THE GENERAL STRIKE of 1926 was a sorry business. It provided, indeed, a magnificent display of working-class solidarity; for in the industries which were called out on strike the response was everywhere so great as to astonish both the Government and the Trade Union leaders. Nor was there, during the nine days the strike lasted, any considerable breakaway at any point. From the standpoint of the Trade Union rank and file, the General Strike was carried out with exemplary courage and loyalty.

But that, unhappily, is not the whole story. No great movement can succeed without leadership; and in the General Strike there was none. No sooner had it been declared than it became plain to everybody that no preparations had been made for it and that the General Council, which was responsible for its conduct, was entirely without a plan. The General Council, indeed, had clearly never meant the stoppage to occur: its members had supposed that, in 1926 as in 1920 and in 1925, the mere threat would be enough to bring the Government to terms—at the very least, to a compromise which the miners could be forced to accept.

But the situation in 1926 was essentially different from that which had existed a year before. The Government had used the interval in making careful preparations: indeed, the subsidy given to the coal industry in 1925 had been designed to gain time for the preparations to be made. The Government was ready in 1926 to meet the strike; and some, at any rate, of its members were determined that so excellent an opportunity of smashing the

Trade Union movement should not be let slip. The Cabinet was well aware that no preparations had been made on the working-class side and that the Trade Union leaders were desperately afraid of the forces which they were supposed to command. Accordingly, instead of meeting the General Council half-way, or even a quarter of the way, the Government seized eagerly on the pretext afforded by the refusal of the *Daily Mail* compositors to print an anti-strike leading article. To the consternation of the General Council, negotiations were broken off; and they were left with no alternative to bringing the workers out on strike. Their bluff had been called.

Now, a General Strike, even if its object is purely to aid a body of workers engaged in an industrial struggle, is necessarily a challenge to the Government in power. Such a strike can succeed only by forcing the Government to its knees; and, when it has once been allowed to begin, it must end either in the fall of the Government or in the defeat of the strikers. But, from the standpoint of the General Council, to bring down the Government, even if it had been within their power, would have been a revolutionary act, for which they were assuredly not prepared. Accordingly, they entered into the General Strike believing that their defeat was inevitable unless the Government would in its mercy consent to save their face. But this the Government had no mind to do. Its leaders believed that they had successfully lured the Trade Unions to their destruction; and they had every intention of making the most of their chance.

Thus, the Trade Union leaders, during the nine days for which the stoppage lasted, were seeking with growing desperation for any means of calling it off without admitting obvious surrender. No such means existed; for the Government would accept nothing short of surrender, and the miners absolutely refused to give way. In the end, with only a pitiable attempt to pretend that they had secured terms when in fact they had secured none, the General Council capitulated, and called off the General Strike,

leaving the miners to fight on alone. The rank and file strikers, ordered back to work before they could understand what had happened, were for the moment induced to go back in the belief that real concessions had been won; and when they realised the completeness of their defeat, there was no possibility of renewing the struggle.

The outcome was deep and bitter disillusionment. Members dropped out of the Trade Unions by thousands, and those who remained had little fight left in them. The miners were gradually starved into surrender; and when the contest was over the Government was free to take its revenge. It did so, first by legally depriving the miners of the seven-hour day which they had won in 1919, and then by passing the oppressive Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act of 1927.¹

At this point it looked likely that the employing classes would consolidate their victory by launching a general offensive against the Trade Unions. But in the event this did not happen. The great American boom was then approaching its height; and the British employers, assured of docile labour if they left well alone, were in a position to reap huge profits. It did not suit their book to launch just then a great anti-labour offensive which would necessarily interrupt production and deprive them of their share in the prevailing capitalist prosperity. A large number of them held it wiser, instead of stamping on the Trade Unions, to come to terms with them while they were in a humble and contrite mood—terms which would consolidate capitalist supremacy and, if possible, carry with them a permanent incorporation of Trade Unionism in the capitalist machine.

This was the real meaning of the 'Mond-Turner' Conference, launched in 1928 on the initiative of Sir Alfred Mond (later Lord Melchett), the head of the great chemical combine. In face of differences among the employers, Mond was not able to act officially on behalf of the whole

¹ See pages 129 ff.

capitalist class; but the Federation of British Industries and the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations stood aside in order to give him his chance. Mond thereupon formed an unofficial group of leading employers and approached the General Council of the Trades Union Congress with a proposal to meet its members in order to discuss the future relations of employers and workers with a view to the promotion of Industrial Peace. The General Council, relieved at this respite, eagerly accepted his invitation; and the 'Mond-Turner' Conferences were begun.

Under these auspices were worked out in the next year or so elaborate plans for a joint council of employers and Trade Unionists, which was not only to prevent industrial disputes but also to work out a joint economic policy and use the combined influence of both sides to secure its acceptance by the Government. In return for somewhat better treatment of the unemployed and certain other social reforms, the Trade Unions were, in effect, though not of course in so many words, to surrender their militancy and their Socialist aspirations and to accept the capitalist system, merely endeavouring to make the best terms they could for their members without challenging the employers' final control.

The Trades Union Congress, cowed and financially prostrate as a result of the General Strike, accepted these recommendations by a large majority, in face of the opposition of A. J. Cook, the miners' secretary, and a few other left-wing leaders. But the two great employers' organisations in the end rejected the proposal for a joint council, apparently considering that it was unnecessary to offer the Trade Unions even the very subordinate part in framing economic policy which Mond had been prepared to grant. Accordingly, the Mond-Turner Conferences led to no formal result; but it is plain that they exercised a very profound influence on the minds of the Trade Union leaders. Ever since, and especially since the downfall of the second Labour Government in 1931, official Trade

Unionism has acted largely in the spirit of Sir Alfred Mond's proposals. It has endeavoured, not to challenge capitalism, but to make terms with it; and it has regarded as its worst enemies, not the employers, but those Trade Unionists who have endeavoured to recall it to a more militant policy.

PART II

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND
STATE ACTION

THE WAGE SYSTEM

IN GREAT BRITAIN, according to the letter of the law, employer and workman are equal parties to a civil contract. The employer agrees to employ the workman at certain wages and under certain conditions, and the workman agrees to work for the employer at these wages and subject to these conditions. If either party fails to observe the terms of the contract, the other party can sue him for damages in a civil action.

This contract, he it observed, is at law purely an agreement between the employer (who may, of course, be a partnership or joint-stock company) and an individual workman. The collective agreements which Trade Unions make with employers or employers' associations have, as such, no legal force. The contracts of which the law takes notice are individual contracts of employment under which a single workman has engaged himself to work and an employer to employ him on certain terms.

The vast majority of workmen have, however, no written contracts of employment with their employers. The contracts are unwritten; and they go, in the vast majority of cases, by the 'custom of the trade' or the practice of the particular factory or place of employment where a man is to work. Sometimes there is an oral contract with the individual workman, especially when he is to receive a special wage on account of his exceptional skill or the scarcity of a particular kind of labour. Workers 'on the staff' and members of the supervisory grades may have written contracts of employment; or at any rate the terms of their employment may be recorded in a formal exchange

of letters. But for the vast majority of workers the terms of employment are not written down, but depend on the custom or practice of the trade, or upon collective agreements made by Trade Unions on behalf of their members, either with single employers or with employers' associations representing a number of federated firms.

The contract, whether written or oral or assumed from the practice of the trade, may be for a shorter or a longer period. For manual workers, the commonest form is that under which the contract can be ended by a week's notice on either side, though the employer reserves his freedom to dismiss a man for misconduct at any time. The requirement of a week's notice does not, however, usually mean that the worker is entitled to a fixed weekly wage. The employer in most cases pledges himself to no more than the keeping of the workman on the firm's books for a week, and the payment of wages to him for the hours actually worked (or the amount of work actually done). Thus, where a workman under a weekly contract is only called upon to work, say, four days in the week, on account of a shortage of work, he normally receives only four days pay. In certain trades, notably on the railways, the main body of employees has been successful, by Trade Union pressure, in securing the concession of the 'guaranteed week'—that is, of a full week's pay even if regular work is not available. But this is still exceptional. Most workmen have no guarantee of regular weekly earnings, even when they are under weekly contracts of employment.

The contract runs in certain trades for a much shorter period than the week. It may run only for a day, a half-day, or even an hour. This means that the employer can dismiss the workman from employment at a day's notice, or even, in some cases, at an hour's notice. Contracts running for very short periods are found chiefly in trades where work is largely casual or intermittent, as at the docks, or in the building trades. In occupations of these types the Trade Unions have long been demanding guaranteed earnings—the guaranteed day or week at the docks, or some form

of payment for 'wet time', i.e. time lost through bad weather, in the building industry.

Longer contract periods are found in certain cases. Thus, some, but not all, miners work under fortnightly contracts, and among non-manual workers monthly contracts are very common. Higher salaried officials have usually still longer periods; and most salaried workers are paid at fixed monthly or quarterly rates, though sometimes they forfeit their salaries if they are absent owing to illness or any cause other than shortage of work. A small minority of manual workers is also employed under 'staff' conditions, that is, at a regular weekly wage independent of the supply of work from day to day; and in the public services there are bodies of regular workers who are practically secure from dismissal except for 'misconduct'. But these are exceptional cases: in privately-owned industry generally the only manual workers who enjoy any guarantee of regular earnings are the 'staff' workers employed in maintaining the machinery or in other tasks of quite special importance and skill.

This question of the terms of contract is important, because it governs not only the workman's rights to certain wages and conditions, but also his right to strike. A workman who leaves his job in breach of contract is guilty of no crime—for there is nothing criminal in breaking a purely civil contract. But he can be sued for damages caused to his employer by the sudden withdrawal of his labour. Accordingly, under normal conditions, a Trade Union in calling any of its members out on strike gives enough notice of its intention to allow the period for which the workers are under contract to expire before the strike begins. Similarly, an employer gives notice of an impending reduction in wages or change in conditions of work, or of his intention to dismiss an individual workman or to close down his factory and so terminate the workers' employment.

But here a further point arises. Legally, we have seen, the contract of employment is purely individual. When a

Trade Union gives notice to an employer that its members intend to strike, the notice has no legal force, because the Trade Union is not, at law, a party to its members' contracts. According to the letter of the law, each workman has to give individual notice. But a practice has grown up, wherever employers 'recognise' Trade Unions for purposes of collective bargaining, of accepting collective notice of an impending withdrawal of labour, even though it has no legal force. It was an exceptional act of irritation when in 1937 the colliery owners refused to accept collective notice of the intention of the Mineworkers' Federation to call a national strike in support of the Harworth miners, and insisted on individual notices being handed in by every miner.

Sometimes, of course, strikes take place without notice—especially when some grievance arises suddenly, and the men feel that it would be intolerable to continue at work unless it were put right. This occurs, for example, where an employer victimises a leading Trade Unionist by sudden dismissal, or where an attempt is made, without prior consultation and agreement, to alter the established conditions of work in a particular factory. An employer may call upon a workman to operate more machines than before, or he may set unskilled workers to do jobs which skilled craftsmen regard as their special preserve. Or he may speed up the pace of work, or restrict the time allowed for meals, or do any of a hundred other things which the workmen resent as an attempt to break down their cherished customs and traditions. When this happens, the workmen often cease work at once as a protest, and either walk out of the factory or remain there without doing any work. Strikes of this sudden kind are nearly always 'unofficial'—that is to say, they arise spontaneously without the authorisation of the Trade Unions. This authorisation is usually sought afterwards; and it is sometimes given. But most Trade Union leaders are reluctant to give it, unless the provocation is extreme; and most collective agreements between Trade Unions and employers' associations include

a provision that no strike shall begin until there has been an attempt to negotiate a settlement in accordance with a formal, and often slow-moving, procedure laid down in the agreement itself.

Workmen who engage in sudden strikes without due notice render themselves liable to civil actions for damages; and such actions are sometimes brought. But very often, when the strike comes to be settled, one of the terms of settlement is that no claims for damages shall be pressed. Only when the employers are in a vindictive mood are the strikers actually brought before the courts and compelled to pay damages. Many employers were in such a mood after the General Strike of 1926, in which many Trade Union Executives had called upon their members to strike without legal notice. A number of Trade Unions, including the National Union of Railwaymen and the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, were compelled on that occasion to pay substantial sums to the employers, and to admit the legal fault which had been committed, before the employers would agree not to proceed with actions against their members in the courts. This was not because the employers had any legal claim against the Trade Unions, but because the Unions agreed to pay a lump sum in settlement, on condition that the employers dropped their legal claims against the individual members.

Nevertheless, sudden strikes continue to occur, and will continue as long as capitalism exists. At law, the employer is the master who has bought the use of the workman's time, and has the right to order him to do anything that is not contrary to the terms of the contract between them. But there are many things which the workman simply will not do without an attempt to resist, whatever the employer's legal rights may be. Skilled craftsmen, for example, feel that if they once allow an unskilled man to work a machine that has been hitherto reserved for skilled men, or an established custom to be broken, their case will be prejudiced when the question comes to be argued out between the Trade Union and the employers' association. They

claim that the employer who wishes to make a change ought to give due notice of his intention, and leave the old conditions in being until the matter has been argued out with the Trade Union. If he attempts to introduce changes without prior consultation and agreement, they will strike, if they feel able to, whatever the law may say.

The workmen are the more inclined to do this, whenever they feel strong enough, because they know the customs and conditions of their own workshop at first hand, whereas the Trade Union officials, who have to deal with a large number of separate factories, cannot have the same direct knowledge. When a body of workmen are labouring under a strong grievance and have a keen sense that they are being put upon, practically the only way in which they can make known the strength of their resentment is by striking. If they merely call in the Trade Union official, and then wait with the grievance unremedied until all the elaborate processes of formal negotiation have been gone through, very often the mischief is done, and the solidarity of the men broken, before the negotiations have run their course. The time for effective action has gone by, and the cause is lost. The sudden strike is often a highly effective weapon, especially in times of good trade, when employers stand to lose heavily by an interruption of work. It is a weapon which workmen will never give up, whatever formal collective agreements may prescribe—though it is, of course, a weapon which breaks in the workmen's hands if it is used too often or without good cause.

Workmen are very often censured in the newspapers for striking in breach of agreement. But newspaper readers, before accepting these censures at their face value, should be very sure that they understand what lies behind these sudden strikes. Employers and workmen may be, in the eyes of the law, equal parties to a civil contract; but they are never equal parties in fact. The workman, under the contract, is bound to serve his employer: the employer is entitled to order the workman about. The relation between them is thus essentially unequal. The workman can do

nothing to change the terms of employment without the employer's consent: the employer who wishes to change them needs only to give an order, which the workman is expected to obey. The employer, therefore, never needs to break a contract by locking out his workmen without notice. He issues an order, and they have either to obey it or go on strike in breach of contract, and thus put themselves legally in the wrong. It is easy for employers to talk about the 'sanctity of contracts', because they are seldom under any inducement to break them. But the workmen have sometimes to choose between breaking their contracts and breaking faith with their fellow-workers, in such a way as to allow the employer to worsen the conditions of employment. Under such conditions, workmen cannot be expected to keep their contracts: indeed, they would be wrong to do so, if it is in their power to resist.

Often, however, workmen are not able to resist. This often happens when trade is bad; for then the employer minds much less if there is a stoppage of work, and the men who go on strike can be much more easily replaced. Consequently, many employers deliberately use periods of trade depression for the purpose of beating down workshop customs and conditions to which they object. They give orders which they are well aware would be disobeyed if trade were good, in the confidence that the workmen will yield sooner than risk losing their jobs. This sort of pressure in bad times can be resisted only where Trade Union organisation is very strong; and, as we shall see, trade depression usually weakens Trade Unionism, especially in the less skilled occupations and in those which are specially liable to extreme fluctuations of activity.

A sudden strike usually involves breach of contract by the workers concerned. But even where ample notice has been given to comply with the terms of contract, a strike may still involve a breach of collective agreement. Collective agreements made between Trade Unions and employers have, as we have seen, no legal force. They are not binding at law, and nobody can be punished at law for breaking

them. They have, however, what is called 'moral' force. Now, collective agreements run for much longer periods than are covered by the terms of legal contract. Where a Trade Union, or group of Trade Unions, comes to an agreement with an employer or an employers' association about wages, hours, and conditions of work, this agreement is commonly made to last for a year at least, and often for several years, or alternatively is made to run on indefinitely, subject to the right of either party to give so many months' notice to bring it to an end. Usually collective agreements either fix wages and conditions absolutely for as long as they remain in force, or lay down an agreed procedure for changing them during the currency of the agreement. Usually they also lay down that no strike or lock-out shall take place while the agreement lasts on any issue covered by it; and in addition they often provide that no strike or lock-out shall take place on any issue at all until an agreed procedure of formal negotiation has been gone through.

It follows that, in industries covered by agreements of this kind, although the workmen are legally quite entitled to strike after, say, a week's notice, their Trade Unions may have promised on their behalf that they will not strike for some months or years ahead. If they do strike all the same, they commit no legal offence; but the Trade Union which has signed the agreement on their behalf is in a difficulty. If it endorses the strike, it is breaking its own agreement; and it will not then be in a good position for holding the employers to its observance in other cases. The employers may, indeed, repudiate the entire agreement, on the plea that it has been invalidated by the Union's connivance at the breach. Accordingly Trade Union leaders usually insist on the vital importance of their members observing the agreements which the Union has made, and refuse, when they can, to recognise any strike which is called in breach of a collective agreement.

But, just as men will not always keep even their legal contracts when the provocation to break them is great, so

Trade Unions cannot always refuse official recognition to strikes called in breach of collective agreement. The feeling among the members in favour of the strike may be so strong that the officials are compelled to give way; and some Unions have special courts of appeal, consisting of rank and file members, to which the strikers can carry their case against the officials and the Executive Committee. Strikes in breach of collective agreement are therefore sometimes recognised, but only when the pressure from the main body of the membership is very strong.

As trade is sometimes good and sometimes bad, Trade Unions and employers have often conflicting interests, not only over wages and hours and conditions of labour, but also over the period of time for which collective agreements are to run. If trade seems likely to get worse, it is in the interest of the workers to do all they can to stabilise wages and conditions over the ensuing depression: whereas, if a boom is to be expected, it is to the employers' interest to tie down the workers for as long as possible, so as to prevent them from demanding advances as profits rise. This makes it very important for Trade Union negotiators to be as fully informed as the employers' officials about the probable future course of economic activity, both generally and in each particular trade. In the past, employers have usually been more successful in tying down the workers in anticipation of a boom than Trade Unions have been in stabilising conditions before a slump. But this need not be so.

A boom usually means rising prices, involving a higher cost of living. It thus causes real wages to fall, if money wages remain unchanged. When prices rise sharply, this creates an intolerable situation which will certainly lead to strikes unless the employers agree to improve conditions, even where agreements have still some time to run. On the other hand, slumps usually mean falling prices, which increase real wages unless money wages fall. But in a slump only a fraction of the workers remains fully employed: the rest, even if they are getting higher real wages *per hour*,

usually average a good deal less *per week*, when account has been taken of the effects of short time and intermittent employment.

Strikes, both official and unofficial, are most likely to occur in periods of capitalist prosperity; for workers are then least in fear of losing their jobs. It often happens, however, that a period of rising activity finds many of the Trade Unions bound by long-term agreements which have still some time to run: so that wage-rates lag behind rising prices. In such cases, there is likely to be a wave of unofficial strikes before the Trade Unions have had time to come forward with official claims for improved conditions. There is, indeed, some danger that unless some of the workers are able to act promptly the opportunity may be lost. Nor is there any doubt that the indication of a readiness to strike often influences employers generally towards the granting of demands which they would otherwise refuse. Thus, a few prompt strikes may often enable the Trade Unions in other industries or districts to secure without stoppages of work concessions for which they would otherwise have been compelled to fight.

SYSTEMS OF WAGE-PAYMENT

TRADE UNIONS HAVE struggled throughout their history to establish standard rates of wages. In the case of the skilled trades, such rates go back a long way beyond recorded Trade Union activity. There were well-established rates of wages for the various types of craftsmen in London and other towns throughout the eighteenth century; and agricultural labourers also tended to be paid at regular rates. There was much less uniformity in the case of less skilled industrial workers; and, of course, where work was done at home under the 'domestic system', piece-work payment was the rule.

Piece-rates could be standardised as much as weekly, daily, or hourly time-rates. But in practice the piece-working trades—especially textiles—seem to have been subject to much greater fluctuations in wage-rates, corresponding to greater fluctuation in the demand for their products, than the skilled urban crafts. As machinery and the factory system grew more prevalent, standard wage-rates tended to disappear, and in the factory trades wide divergences appeared between one establishment and another. The new competitive spirit also affected the employers in the older crafts; and in new skilled trades, such as those in engineering, it took time to establish anything in the nature of a standard rate.

The Trade Unions, almost confined until the later nineteenth century to skilled workers, sought both to establish local standard rates for each craft and to widen as much as they could the area of bargaining, so as to

establish uniform rates in neighbouring towns. As 'recognition' was won, standard craft rates were gradually embodied in collective agreements; but in most industries these remained local right up to 1914. Thereafter, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter, there was a growing tendency to introduce some form of national bargaining under which, even if wages continued to differ from district to district, they were fixed or co-ordinated under the terms of a single national bargain for an entire trade.

Inevitably, it is easier to lay down standard rates for skilled workers following a definite craft than for less skilled workers who have not passed through an apprenticeship and may be engaged on a wide variety of processes calling for different degrees of skill. It is also, in general, easier to fix standard time-rates than standard piece-rates, which are often complicated by differences of conditions between one establishment and another. In some industries, such as engineering, there are no standard piece-rates, but piece-workers (or workers under other systems of 'payment by results') have the same guaranteed time-rates of wages as the time-workers, *plus* a guarantee that each employer will fix piece-rates on such a basis as to yield to the average, or ordinary, worker so much per cent above the time-rate.

Piece-work prevails in most branches of the textile trades, in coal-mining, and in a great number of the lesser factory industries. The building industry is the great home of time-work, and of Trade Union resistance to attempts to impose 'payment by results'. In the metal-working industries, 'payment by results' is now more common than time-work; but a number of the most skilled workers remain under the time-work system. In the transport trades time-work is naturally prevalent; but there are considerable bodies of piece-workers, e.g. at the docks. In retail distribution, there are often 'commissions' over and above the fixed time-rates. Agricultural workers are mainly on time-work, but with special allowances for particular types of work.

Piece-rates, and other forms of 'payment by results', usually mean that each individual worker is paid a wage varying with his individual output, though not necessarily in an unvarying ratio to his output. The well-known 'premium bonus system', for example, involves what is in effect a falling piece-rate as output is increased; and there are other systems under which the price per unit rises when output exceeds a certain standard. 'Payment by results' admits of countless variations; and in the hands of the so-called 'scientific management' experts and 'efficiency engineers' incredibly complicated fancy systems of wage-payment have sometimes been applied. 'Straight' piece-work, however, still remains much the most usual system; and in general the workers object to it much less than to more complicated methods of payment.

In particular, the workers have always objected to 'premium bonus'. There are several variants of this; but under the commonest, the 'Rowan' system, the employer begins by fixing a standard time in which he considers the job ought to be done by a normal workman under time-work conditions, and then offers an addition of one per cent to the standard wage-earnings for every one per cent of 'time saved'—that is, for every one per cent less than the standard time in which the job is actually done. Suppose a workman's standard time-rate is 15*d.* an hour, and the standard time allowed for a particular job is 100 minutes. If the workman does the job in 80 minutes, he will have saved 20 per cent off the standard time, and will be paid for 80 minutes' work (not 100 minutes') at his standard time-rate + 20 per cent. He will thus get for his 80 minutes 2*s.*, made up of 20*d.* standard time-payment + 4*d.* premium bonus. If he does the job in 60 minutes, he will get 15*d.* + 6*d.* bonus—1*s.* 9*d.* for his hour's work. Thus, the workman's hourly rate varies as his output increases. But the labour cost of the job to the employer falls. If it is done in the standard time, the labour cost is 25*d.*; if it takes 80 minutes it is 24*d.*; if it takes only 60 minutes, it is 21*d.* And in addition the employer

saves on 'overheads' by getting a larger output from his capital equipment in a given time. The workmen feel this to be unjust. They feel that the piece-work price, instead of falling as they increase their efforts, ought to rise so as to give them a share in the saving on overhead costs.

During the past few years, both 'premium bonus' and other systems of payment by results have gone out of fashion, and been largely replaced by the 'Bedaux' system. Under this, the initial process is the same. An 'efficiency expert' (sent into the factory by the Bedaux company) fixes a standard time in which he considers each operation ought to be performed. This time is expressed in 'standard B's', or 'Bedaux units'—each unit representing an estimated minute's work. The worker is then paid according to the number of B's he produces per hour. Up to 60 B's he receives only a standard time rate; beyond 60 he receives three-quarters of the payment at the rate of 60 B's per hour, the remaining quarter being paid as a bonus to foremen and supervisors or other workers not directly operating the machines. Thus, if a particular worker produces 80 B's per hour, and has a standard rate of 12*d.* per hour, he will receive 12*d.* + 3*d.* (three-quarters of the 4*d.* payable for the 20 extra B's), and the foreman or other additional workers will receive the remaining 1*d.* Under this system the labour cost to the employer remains unchanged; but the employer saves on overheads, and the supervisory workers are given a financial incentive to speed up the actual workers on the machines.

The 'Bedaux' system is exceedingly unpopular among Trade Unionists. They object to providing out of their own piece-work earnings a bonus which is paid to induce their supervisors to speed them up; and, even more fundamentally, they object to the entire system of fixing standard times for jobs by the *fiat* of experts who proclaim the 'scientific' character of their determination as beyond all question. The effect of the Bedaux system—as indeed of all the so-called 'scientific' systems of wage-payment—is

to remove the fixing of piece-work prices outside the range of collective bargaining and to deny the Trade Unions any right to a say in the relative prices attached to different jobs. Moreover, the workers allege that the experts, by means of 'time-study' and 'motion-study', fix the standard times in such a way as to compel them to follow a fixed set of motions at an intolerable pace if they are not to fall below the standard and face the 'sack'.

These systems are applicable only where the output of the individual worker can be measured and depends largely on his individual output of energy and dexterity. But there are, even among machine-operators, many jobs to which these conditions do not apply. Sometimes a job has to be done by a squad of workers, working together in such a way that their individual outputs cannot be distinguished, or each worker's pace must be accommodated to that of the others. This arises, for example, on skilled work in building a big machine, or in certain dyeing operations. Again, sometimes a succession of operations is deliberately organised on the 'conveyer-belt' system, under which each worker must perform his particular operation in the time allowed by the moving platform as the work in progress passes before him in his turn..

In the first of these groups of cases, payment by results is often made on a collective basis. Each worker receives his standard time-rate, and any piece-work surplus is divided among the members of the squad in proportion to their time-work earnings. This is also done when day and night shifts of workers succeed each other on a continuous job or process. But in the second type of case, where the output is fixed for the individual worker by the pace set by the machine or the 'conveyer-belt', payment by results is not really applicable at all, and the work is usually paid for at time-rates, sometimes with the addition of a flat-rate bonus in return for the additional effort demanded by the general speeding-up.

Until the advent of the 'conveyer-belt', payment by results was almost everywhere spreading at the expense

of the time-work system. But if the employer can so speed up the machine-equipment as to compel the workers to put out their maximum effort, there is no need for him to offer piece-work inducements to higher output. He may indeed, if there is any shortage of the requisite kinds of labour, have to offer higher time-rates in order to induce workers to stand the hotter pace (e.g. Henry Ford in his earlier days); but this offer will not take the form of payment by results. It seems likely that, as this highly mechanised method of speeding-up spreads, there will be some tendency for piece-work again to be replaced by time-work.

It is not possible to define any general working-class attitude towards time-work and payment by results as rival methods of wage-payment. Often, the most extreme forms of sweating have been practised at the expense of time-workers—above all, under the sub-contract system. Under this system, the employer pays a sub-contractor or 'piece-master' at piece-work rates, and the piece-master in turn engages labour to work under him at time-rates, relying on his power to drive this labour hard, so as to pocket a satisfying balance between what he receives and what he has to pay out. Trade Unions have waged war for many decades upon this system, especially in the coal mines and the iron and steel trades. It had been in the main eradicated from these industries by the post-war period; but in the coal mines it showed a tendency to return after the miners' defeat of 1926, and in certain coalfields it has not yet been entirely driven out.

Until 1918, the Trade Unions in coal-mining, iron and steel, cotton and other textiles, and a fair number of other industries generally preferred piece-work to time-work systems for the main bodies of workers employed. The miners, indeed, demanded a minimum rate, to be guaranteed to every hewer, even if by reason of working in an 'abnormal place' he could not earn a tolerable piece-work wage. This was the underlying issue in the national mining strike of 1912, which resulted in the Coal Mines

Minimum Wage Act of that year.¹ But there was no strong demand for a minimum time-rate from the textile workers until, after the war, weavers especially found their earnings drastically reduced because they were given fewer machines to mind. In both these industries, and in some others, post-war conditions strengthened the preference for time-work as against piece-work—or at any rate for guaranteed time-work minimum rates to be paid irrespective of output.

On the other hand, the builders, and only to a smaller extent the skilled engineers and other metal-working craftsmen, have traditionally favoured time-work. The builders' Unions still for the most part refuse to recognise any system of payment by results. The engineers and metal-workers generally have, however, been driven to an ever-increasing extent to accept piece-work—and even other systems of payment by results—as a consequence of increasing mechanisation of processes and high cost of capital equipment leading to more and more insistent pressure towards speeding up. Some of the most skilled work in these trades is still done under time-work conditions; but piece-workers are now in a considerable majority in the metal-working groups as a whole.

As Marx pointed out long ago in an important chapter of *Capital*, all systems of wage-payment rest finally on a common foundation. Even if the worker is paid so much per hour or per day, his wage is not unrelated to an output which is expected of him, and if he falls below the output which makes it worth the employer's while to employ him rather than another, he will be discharged. There is a minimum output which the time-worker must maintain in order to keep his job. But though all wage-payments are related to output, the differences between time-work and payment by results are important. Time-work means uniform payment for workers belonging to the same grade; payment by results means differences among such workers. Time-work usually involves more detailed supervision by the employer or his representatives; for it does not offer

¹ See page 111.

the workers special inducements to speed themselves up. Time-work is easier to bargain about, and provides an easier basis for the standard wage-rates that Trade Unions seek to enforce; and it also provides fewer opportunities for the employer or foreman to set one worker against another—e.g. by using an especially fast worker as a 'rate-setter' in fixing piece-work prices for the rest.

On the other hand, where Trade Unions are strong enough to prevent 'rate-cutting', payments by results may yield higher earnings than time-work, though not without calling for a greater expenditure of effort. Moreover, to the workman of high skill or dexterity piece-work offers the prospect of a larger remuneration than the employer will provide if he has to pay a uniform wage to all workers in a given grade. Even where there is strong opposition to payment by results, there will nearly always be some workers who will prefer it. By some it will be held the juster system, because it comes nearer to rewarding each individual according to his work.

Today in the Soviet Union payment by results is very widely applied. According to the Communist doctrine, the ultimate formula for a classless society is: 'From each according to his abilities: to each according to his needs.' But the formula for the transition is different. It is held that the first step is to abolish incomes derived from class-exploitation—surplus value. When these are swept away, what remains is a system which rewards each producer according to the value of his service. Payment by results seems to fit in with this requirement, wherever individual products can be assessed. Accordingly, Trade Unionists who oppose payment by results in capitalist countries, on the ground that it facilitates exploitation by setting one worker against another, may favour it 'under Socialism'—that is, in the transition from a capitalist to a fully Communist society.

Such considerations, however, play little or no part in determining the ordinary Trade Union attitude in capitalist countries. It can be said that, broadly, Trade Unions

begin with a general preference for time-rates, because they are easier to standardise in collective bargaining and have less tendency to set workman against workman. But this preference may be overcome where payment by results seems clearly to offer prospects of higher earnings. In such cases, the tendency is for the Trade Unions to demand a guaranteed minimum time-rate as a basis, and to insist that piece-work shall be so adjusted as to allow a normal worker to earn at least 'time and a quarter' or 'time and a third' as a recompense for the additional effort involved.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

TRADE UNIONS HAVE fought a long* and hard struggle for the recognition of the rights of collective bargaining. Up to 1824 combination as such was a crime, punishable either under the Combination Act of 1800 or earlier statutes applying to particular trades, or under common law—for the judges regarded combinations as ‘criminal conspiracies’ for the unlawful ‘restraint of trade’. The Act of 1824, obtained by Francis Place’s wire-pulling, swept all these legal restrictions away; but the amending Act of 1825 confined the legalisation of combinations to action designed to influence wages, hours or the terms of the labour contract, as distinct from attempts to regulate the number of apprentices or to confine employment to Union men. Under this narrow legality Trade Unions had to exist until the fuller legalisation of 1871.

Nevertheless, both while the laws against combination were in force and after their repeal, many bodies of workers did make collective bargains with their employers. This, however, applied chiefly to the small Trade Clubs of skilled artisans, which were able to strike bargains for themselves because they often had a monopoly of a particular type of skilled labour. Even when the larger combinations of miners and textile workers were being fiercely repressed during and after the Napoleonic Wars, these small Trade Clubs were usually let alone. There were extensive collective agreements in such trades as printing and cabinet-making, even during the period when all combinations were nominally forbidden by law.

After 1825 the Trade Unions, enjoying a very limited legality, set out to secure wider 'recognition' of their right to bargain collectively. But the employers, especially in the new factory trades and in the coal mines, were usually determined not to concede this right. The lock-out developed as a weapon against Trade Union claims; and in certain cases employers presented the 'document'—that is, a paper renouncing Trade Union membership which the worker was asked to sign as a condition of retaining employment. The 'document' was freely used against Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union in 1833-4—for example, in the famous 'Derby turn-out' of 1833. It was to reappear many times in Trade Union history—in the great engineering struggle of 1852, in the London building dispute of 1859, in the transport strike of 1912, and in the Dublin dispute of 1913, to name only a few outstanding instances.

Collective bargaining, except on a local basis between small Trade Clubs of skilled workers and the small masters who employed them, made no great progress till after 1850. In the 'fifties it began to spread in the cotton industry; and in the 'sixties there was a beginning of it in the Midland textile trades—lace and hosiery—and in the building trades. But progress became much more rapid after the fuller recognition of Trade Unions in 1871. In that year the Northumberland coalowners recognised the Miners' Association, and the Durham owners followed in 1872. The Conciliation Act of 1867, giving the State a limited power to bring the parties to a trade dispute together, also helped to foster a new attitude towards collective bargaining in many trades. The iron trade in the North of England set up a Conciliation Board, and adopted the sliding-scale system of wage regulation, in 1869.

From the 'seventies collective bargaining became more definitely established in the textile, mining and metal industries. The less skilled workers had still to fight for recognition; but after 1889 the rise of the New Unionism led to a considerable spread of the system. In certain industries,

however, notably railways and shipping, the employers still obstinately refused to recognise Trade Unionism at all. As late as 1892 the leading railway manager told a House of Commons Committee that "you might as well have a Trade Union in the army as have it on the railways"—because, he held, "discipline has to be kept at a very high standard". The Shipping Federation, not content with refusing recognition, became notorious for its policy of maintaining a corps of strike-breakers.

Nevertheless, collective bargaining continued to gain ground. The railway all-grades movements of 1907 and 1911 compelled the State to intervene and establish a system of Railway Conciliation Boards, through which the Trade Unions were able to bargain collectively, though full recognition was not conceded until 1919. The shipowners also came into line during the war, under State control; and the National Maritime Board, first set up as a State agency, was continued on a voluntary basis after 1918. The pre-war attempts of the Liberal Government to set up more effective negotiating machinery over industry as a whole through an Industrial Council representing the associations on both sides came to nothing. But wartime control led to a great extension of the practice of collective bargaining; and many of the bodies set up during the war developed into Joint Industrial Councils under the Whitley Scheme of 1917. The Trade Boards Acts of 1909 and 1918, which are dealt with elsewhere, also served to foster the growth of collective negotiation.

Up to 1914, in most trades, collective bargaining remained on a local basis, though there was sometimes a National Conference or Conciliation Board to which disputes could be referred in default of local agreement. But during the war, when the cost of living became the dominant factor in wage-adjustments, there was a marked tendency to substitute national for local variations, either by agreement or under the wartime procedure of compulsory arbitration in the munitions industries. After the

war, the compulsory element disappeared, except in Trade Board trades; but in many cases the method of national negotiation was retained. This did not as a rule mean that wages and conditions were made uniform over the whole country, but that provision was made for agreed national advances or reductions on basic rates which continued to vary locally, and were also subject to adjustment by special negotiation. Some industries—e.g. printing and building—adopted ‘grading’ systems, whereby areas were put into a limited number of wage-grades (London, other large towns, smaller towns, rural areas—for example) and advances or reductions were made uniformly, with provision for periodical ‘re-grading’ to meet changing conditions.

On the railways, a uniform system of labour grading was arrived at in 1919, though not without a big strike; and the countless variations in grading between companies were eliminated. In 1921, in connection with the amalgamation of the railways into the ‘Big Four’, a new system of national negotiation was embodied in the Railways Act, based on full recognition of the Unions and ultimate reference of differences to an outside tribunal, which was, however, not armed with compulsory powers. This machinery is described in the chapter dealing with the railways; and to this and other chapters describing the position in particular industries reference should be made for the detailed developments of the post-war period.

In general, the tendency was definitely towards greater centralisation of bargaining machinery. This was due partly to the growth of organisation among the employers, and partly to the increasingly competitive conditions as between different areas. From the Trade Union standpoint it had the initial advantage of bringing wages in backward areas up nearer to the standards of the more advanced, but also the disadvantage of making it much harder to begin a general forward movement by securing improved conditions in a particular district where Trade Unionism was strong. It further tended in some degree to

make the processes of collective bargaining more remote from the ordinary Trade Union member, and therewith to relax his keenness and cause him to leave matters more in the hands of the national leaders.

Nevertheless, the Trade Unions in general have stood for the widest possible area as the unit for collective bargaining. National negotiation obviously economises effort, and tends to reduce the number of strikes—though, of course, strikes are bigger when they do occur. It also tends to a tightening-up of Trade Union discipline; for under a national system a local unofficial strike is more likely to provoke retaliation over a wide area—perhaps even a national lock-out of the entire industry.

In one outstanding case, the development in recent years has been away from national bargaining. After the dispute of 1893 the miners secured a Conciliation Board for a 'Federated Area' covering most of the English coalfields except those of the North-East. Scotland and South Wales secured separate boards of their own a little later. The M.F.G.B.'s policy was to establish a single negotiating body for the entire industry, with national wage variations upon basic rates settled separately for each coalfield. Under wartime State control this was practically secured, but after decontrol, and after the prolonged stoppage of 1921, the coalowners insisted on a return to district negotiations, without any national co-ordinating machinery. This process was carried further after the struggle of 1926, when the owners insisted on breaking up the country into a larger number of separate areas. The miners continue to demand national bargaining; but the coalowners have so far been able to resist this, and to maintain separate wage determinations in each coalfield.

The machinery of collective bargaining differs greatly from industry to industry, according to the nature of industrial organisation and labour processes, and to the strength of Trade Unionism. In well-organised trades, except coal mining, there is usually some sort of national conference, equally representing Trade Unions and

employers, and without any outside or 'impartial' element. There is often local machinery on a similar basis, for dealing with local issues, subject to appeal to the national body. In particular factories or establishments, bargaining conditions differ very widely. Often there is no workshop machinery, but at most only a right of 'deputation' to the management for the redress of grievances—the local Trade Union officials being called in if the question cannot be settled in this way. In other cases there may be Works or Workshop Committees, or shop stewards may be accorded some negotiating rights, provided that nothing is done in violation of national or district agreements. Trade Unions, however, are apt to be somewhat suspicious of workshop organisation, which employers have sometimes tried to turn into an alternative to Trade Unionism, or to use in such ways as to violate Trade Union standard rates or conditions. This question is further discussed in the chapter dealing with the Shop Stewards' Movement.

Where negotiation is done through national and local conferences, without any outside element coming in, final failure to agree means a strike or lock-out, unless one party decides to abandon or suspend its claim. Sometimes, however, the bargaining machinery includes provision for reference to outsiders, where direct agreement cannot be secured. This may take, broadly speaking, either of two forms. The two sides may agree to submit their differences to an outside tribunal, or to a single arbitrator; or they may call in an outside person, or more than one, to sit with them and either mediate or give a decision upon their claims.

The first of these methods is exemplified where, as in the case of the railway shopmen, disputes are referred by agreement for arbitration by the Industrial Court, or where the national agreement includes, as in the boot and shoe industry, provision for reference of certain types of differences to a single arbitrator. The second has been the method of the miners' Conciliation Boards, which have

had each an 'impartial Chairman' empowered to make a decision when the parties disagree.

It should be noted that the existence of provisions of these types does not mean that the Trade Unions which accept them agree to hand over the settlement of wages and conditions to an outside authority without any limitation upon its powers. The agreements under which these references are accepted run only for limited periods, or can be ended by due notice; and the arbitrator's or chairman's powers are restricted to acting within the terms of these agreements. When a Trade Union wants to improve conditions beyond those made possible by the agreement actually in force, it can terminate the agreement and set out to negotiate a new one by direct bargaining—subject, of course, to any period of notice by which it may have agreed to be bound. The arbitrator or chairman has thus no power to dictate the terms of the new bargain. His functions disappear with the termination of the agreement under which he was called in. In most trades which use machinery of this type, the mutual agreements are in fact periodically revised by direct negotiation, with or without an appeal to the strike.

Necessarily, in collective bargaining a very large part is played by full-time Trade Union officials. The considerations involved are often highly technical, and it is requisite to weigh one section's claim against another's. Moreover, negotiation takes a great deal of time. Usually, in important negotiations, the Trade Union executive acts; but where a number of Unions are involved and negotiation is done through a Federation or Joint Committee, the negotiators are apt to be nearly all full-time officials. On the other hand, where a particular bargaining process affects only one section of a Union's membership (e.g. London busmen in the Transport and General Workers' Union) the body of actual negotiators may be chosen from among those concerned, and may consist of actual wage-earners, with only a full-time official or two to render expert help. In local negotiations, naturally

actual wage-earners play a larger part; but except in workshop matters a full-time official is usually present wherever possible, and tends to take the lead, because he can talk to the employers without fear of victimisation, and on more equal terms.

A rough idea of the prevailing methods of collective bargaining can be got from the Ministry of Labour's figures showing the methods by which wage-increases were secured in the two years 1935-6. Direct negotiations between the parties' led to weekly wage increases of £431,000; standing joint bodies were responsible for increases of £209,000. Sliding scales based on the cost of living accounted for £38,000, and scales based on selling prices or 'proceeds of sale' for £40,000. Arbitration and mediation together accounted for only £8,000 a week over the two years. Direct negotiation preponderated in the mining, textile and metal industries; standing joint bodies were mainly responsible in the building and public utility trades, and in transport; sliding scales occurred chiefly in certain of the textile trades and in iron and steel and coal mining, but accounted for only a fraction of the increases even in these trades.

Except in occupations covered by Trade Boards, the processes of collective bargaining normally proceed without any form of State intervention. The Ministry of Labour has power under the Conciliation Act of 1896 to attempt to mediate in any dispute, but without any compulsory authority. The Minister can also, with or without the consent of the parties, set up a Court of Inquiry into any actual or threatened dispute under Part II of the Industrial Courts Act of 1919; but little use has been made of this power in recent years. The Industrial Court, set up under Part I of the same Act, is simply a tribunal to which any dispute can be referred if the parties agree; it has no power to act in any case without both parties' consent; and its decisions have only a morally binding force, as no penalties exist for rejecting them. They are, however, in practice usually observed. Generally, except in trades

considered suitable for Trade Boards, the Trade Unions as well as the employers prefer voluntary bargaining without State intervention, though some Trade Unionists—and some employers—would like to see voluntary trade agreements made enforceable upon the entire trade, as they have been in cotton weaving since 1934. Compulsory arbitration is generally opposed as involving a limitation or even an abrogation of the right to strike.

Although in most old-established industries Trade Unions have now secured full recognition of the right of collective bargaining, this is by no means the case in the newer industries, such as motor-car manufacture and other mass-production trades employing a high proportion of women or less skilled male workers, or among black-coated workers. Many of the big motor firms refuse to recognise any sort of combination; and among black-coats, the Bank Officers' Guild has not yet won its fight for recognition as against the 'house unions' maintained by the separate banks. Collective bargaining does not yet extend over the whole field of employment, even among wage-earners. Indeed, in recent years it has suffered something of a setback through the decline of the older industries, in which Trade Unionism is strong, and the rise of new industries under leadership strongly hostile to Trade Unions. Organisation alone can remedy this, by forcing the newer industries to accept collective bargaining, as the older industries were gradually forced to accept it in the course of the last century.

THE STATE AND THE WAGE SYSTEM

IN GENERAL, AS we have seen, the law regards employer and workman as equal parties to a civil contract, into which they can enter upon any terms on which they can agree. We have also seen that, on account of the difference of power between the parties, this equality does not really exist. So plainly is this the case that even under capitalism the legislature has been driven to recognise the necessity for limiting the 'freedom of contract' in a large number of ways. The most obvious limitations are those laid down in the Factory Acts and in similar Acts applying to mines, merchant ships, and other places of employment. The earliest Factory Act (apart from a special Act of 1802 dealing only with pauper parish apprentices in cotton mills) dates from 1819; and from that date there has been a long succession of Acts, either extending regulation to more trades or amending the provisions. The legislature was impelled to pass the earlier Factory Acts by the revelation of the horrible conditions prevailing in the textile factories in the period of rapid mechanisation which followed the introduction of steam-power. But it passed them with very great reluctance, and kept State intervention within the narrowest possible limits, on the ground that any interference with 'freedom of contract' was at best a necessary evil. At first the protection given by the Acts was confined to children, who were admittedly not in a position to make contracts for themselves on equal terms. Even this protection was fought against bitterly by upholders of the doctrine of 'parental responsibility'. But at length this resistance was overcome; and

presently women and young persons, as well as children, were brought within the scope of the Acts. Parliament still shrank from restricting the 'freedom' of men workers to enter into contracts on any terms; but in practice men employed in the same factories as women and children profited in many cases by the protection.

The earliest Factory Acts aimed chiefly at setting some limit to the length of the working day, and at securing that time should be allowed for meals. But later Acts included more and more provisions designed to insist on precautions against preventable accidents, which were appallingly numerous, and to secure minimum standards of sanitation and air-room for the workers in the interests of public health. When the poor had to live under thoroughly insanitary conditions in crowded factories and factory towns, the rich could not escape the spreading contagion of disease; and in addition, the further-sighted employers, urged on by the more progressive doctors and factory inspectors, began to recognise that ill-health reacted adversely on production. Nevertheless, the Factory Acts were at every stage opposed tooth and nail by the majority of employers, reinforced by doctrinaire Liberals who regarded all interference with 'free contract' as "contrary to the laws of Political Economy".

Gradually, however, the Factory Acts were strengthened and extended, and similar forms of protection were applied to miners, merchant seamen, and, to a much smaller extent, to railway workers and, later still, to shop assistants and other classes of employees. At first, the notion was that the textile industries, which employed large bodies of women and children under factory conditions when most other branches of production were still carried on upon a relatively small scale, formed a group apart; and it was not until 1867 that factory legislation was extended to the main body of workers outside the textile factories. Long before that, in 1847, the textile workers had been granted the ten-hour day; and in 1867 a beginning was made of regulating conditions in workshops as well as in

factories using steam-power. After the 'seventies not much further advance was made until the great codifying Act of 1901; and thereafter there was another long interval before the new amending Act of 1937. Meanwhile, important Mines Acts were passed in 1860, 1872, and 1909; and these were followed by numerous further Acts after 1918.

Although the State was driven, in the first half of the last century, to do something towards regulating the hours of labour and the conditions of work, the upholders of 'free contract' steadily refused, throughout the century, to regulate wages. The wage to be paid seemed to them essentially a matter for the parties to decide between themselves without any interference from the State. The old Elizabethan Statute, which empowered the Justices of the Peace to regulate wages, was repealed in 1813, after the workers had attempted to invoke it for their protection during the period of high prices brought on by the war with France; but it had in fact fallen practically into disuse long before its repeal. Not until 1909 was any new Act regulating wages passed into law. In that year a Liberal Government passed the first Trade Boards Act, the result of long efforts to expose the prevalence of appalling underpayment in a large number of 'sweated' trades. Even the Act of 1909 applied only to a very few industries, of which tailoring was the most important. A number of other trades were brought in after the war under the Trade Boards Act of 1918, which empowered the Minister of Labour to establish a Trade Board for any trade in which serious underpayment was found to exist. But very sparing use has been made of this power; and in many ill-paid occupations there is still no regulation at all. The agricultural workers first secured a minimum wage under the Corn Production Act of 1917, which also gave the farmers a guaranteed price for wheat. But this Act was repealed after the war; and the agricultural workers were without protection until 1924, when the first Labour Government restored their minimum wage. The miners secured what was called a Minimum Wage Act as a result of their national

strike in 1912; but this was really not an Act prescribing a minimum wage, but merely one which entitled miners working in an 'abnormal place', where coal-getting was exceptionally difficult, to have their wages brought up to a minimum based on the wages actually paid to other miners in the same area.

None of the Minimum Wage Acts lays down the actual wages that are to be paid. Each sets up some sort of Board, which is empowered to fix minimum rates for a particular trade or industry (or a series of rates for various grades of workers within a trade or industry). These Boards are usually composed of representative employers and Trade Unionists, together with an appointed 'impartial chairman' and other 'appointed members', who are supposed to hold the balance, and to settle the issue when the two sides cannot agree. In practice, these Boards have in almost all cases fixed very low rates, and have aimed rather at bringing the worst employers in each trade up to the standards accepted already by the more progressive employers than at raising wages to a satisfactory living standard.

Even if agricultural labourers are included, only a small proportion of the workers, mainly in very ill-paid occupations, receive the protection of a legal minimum wage. There is no legal minimum in any of the great industries, such as building, engineering, iron and steel, railways or other transport. The cotton weavers have recently secured an Act somewhat resembling the Coal Mines Minimum Wage Act of 1912; but there is in effect no real minimum wage in either the textile or the mining industry. For the great majority of workers, wages are still left to be settled by 'free contract', either by means of collective bargaining, where Trade Unionism is strong enough, or by the *fiat* of the employer, subject only to his need to secure a supply of labour, where Trade Unionism is either non-existent or too weak to compel negotiation.

There is not even any general legislation limiting the hours of labour. Factories can work only a certain number

of hours a week (with extensions where a shift system is in force). The hours of coal miners are limited by law; and there are legal enactments compelling shops to close at certain hours and to allow a weekly half-holiday. But in general, hours as well as wages are left to be settled by collective bargaining or by the arbitrary decisions of the employers. The British Government has for nearly twenty years steadily refused to ratify the Forty-Eight-Hours Convention adopted at Washington in 1919, at the first session of the new International Labour Organisation formed as part of the League of Nations at the end of the war; and the British Government has also opposed at every stage the more recent efforts of the I.L.O. to secure an International Convention establishing a Forty-Hour working week.

There are, then, only a very few legal limitations on the 'freedom' of employers and workmen to make contracts on what terms they please—or rather, on what terms the employer can compel the workman to accept. 'Freedom of individual contract' is still the rule of industry, modified only by the ability of the Trade Unions to secure improved conditions by collective bargaining, backed by the power of the strike. The 'right to strike' is therefore of basic importance; for even if most collective agreements are arrived at by negotiation without a stoppage of work, the power of the Trade Unions to negotiate effectively depends on the right to withdraw labour if satisfactory terms cannot be secured. We must therefore proceed next to consider this essential right; and therewith we must review the entire position of Trade Unionism under the law, with which the workmen have had to fight many hard battles in order to establish effectively the right to combine.

THE HISTORY OF TRADE UNION LAW

AT COMMON LAW—that is, by the rules of law which judges go by in the absence of definite statutory provisions dealing with the point at issue—a Trade Union is usually a ‘combination in restraint of trade’. In the eighteenth century, when Trade Unions first appeared on a considerable scale, the judges came to hold that most Trade Unions, being in unreasonable restraint of trade and contrary to ‘public policy’, were illegal associations to which it was criminal even to belong. This opinion was confirmed by statute in the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800, which formed part of the measures for the suppression of all Radical agitation passed by Pitt during the war which followed the great French Revolution of 1789. These Acts made combination a statutory crime, punishable by imprisonment on conviction by a court of summary jurisdiction; and at the same time the higher courts continued to pass heavy sentences for conspiracy at common law upon Trade Union leaders who were arraigned before them.

This persecution of Trade Unionism continued until 1824, when, thanks largely to the efforts of Francis Place, the ‘Radical tailor of Charing Cross’, Joseph Hume, the Radical M.P., piloted through Parliament an Act which both repealed the Combination Acts and prevented prosecutions for conspiracy at common law. But this was too much for the employers; and at their instance the Government in 1825 repealed Hume’s Act and substituted for it a much less satisfactory measure. Under the Act of 1825, combinations were allowed only for bargaining about

wages and hours of labour; and with this bare legalisation of Trade Unions were coupled provisions which were designed to cripple Trade Union action. 'Molestation' and 'obstruction' of men willing to work on the employers' terms were expressly made punishable offences; and the courts gave so wide an interpretation to these words that it was nearly impossible to conduct any considerable strike without serious danger of falling foul of the law.

Moreover, the workers found, in 1834, when Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union was sweeping the country, that even the bare right of combination had not yet been effectively secured. In that year six Dorchester farm labourers, known to history as the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs', were sentenced to transportation for the crime of 'administering unlawful oaths'. They had in fact merely formed an Agricultural Labourers' Society as a branch of the great Trades Union; but in doing so they had followed the custom, common in the friendly societies of the time, of using a formal inauguration ceremony for new members, including the swearing of an oath of loyalty to the Union. For this crime they were arrested and convicted under an old statute passed with a quite different intention at the time of the Naval Mutinies of 1797. In effect, these unfortunate labourers were sentenced for no other offence than the act of forming a Trade Union for the purpose of improving their conditions of employment; but despite all the protests which the Radicals made to the Government the Whig leaders, who had but recently passed the Reform Act of 1832, refused to pardon the 'offenders'. Among the urban workers some sort of toleration of combinations had been won as a result of the Acts of 1824 and 1825; but it was still regarded as unpardonable for mere agricultural labourers to attempt collective action.

After some years of convict labour in Australia, the Tolpuddle Martyrs finally received their pardon; but not until 1859 was further progress made towards securing

effective recognition of the right to strike. In that year the Molestation of Workmen Act legalised peaceful picketing, by granting strikers the right peacefully to persuade other workers not to blackleg upon them. Meanwhile, Trade Unions had been enabled, by making use of the Friendly Societies Act of 1855, to secure some protection for their funds against the dishonesty or carelessness of defaulting officials. This was coming to be more important as Trade Unions grew from purely local into national bodies, with considerable funds; and for more than twenty years the Unions used the Friendly Societies Act without hindrance from the law.

But in 1867 it was decided, in the famous case of *Hornby v. Close*, that a Trade Union, being a body unlawful at common law, because it was designed to act 'in restraint of trade', could not make use of the Friendly Societies Acts. This immediately put in jeopardy the financial basis of the movement, by enabling any official to embezzle the funds with impunity. The Trade Unions accordingly agitated vigorously for an improved legal status, which would allow them to proceed by civil action against defaulting officers for the recovery of their money.

But in the meantime a fresh blow had fallen. Certain small Trade Unions of skilled workmen in the Sheffield cutlery trades had used violence against men who worked at a skilled occupation without having served a proper apprenticeship, or refused to join the Union of their craft and to obey its rules. In 1866 and 1867 there occurred in Sheffield a series of 'outrages' against blacklegs and 'illegal men', culminating in the flinging of a can of gunpowder down the chimney of a particularly unpopular blackleg. Before this the employers and a section of the Press had been vociferously demanding the suppression of the Trade Unions; and the 'Sheffield Outrages' received immense publicity as a reinforcement of the employers' case. The employers' supporters in Parliament demanded a Royal Commission to enquire into the Trade Union movement; and the Government acceded to this demand.

From 1867 to 1869, then, the Royal Commission on Trade Unions held its sittings and issued its successive reports. In 1869 Trade Union funds were given temporary protection; and in 1871 the Liberal Government passed the Trade Union Act, which, so far from suppressing the movement, gave it, up to a point, a secure legal basis. A Trade Union could henceforward proceed in the courts against defaulting officials for the recovery of its funds. It could build up large central funds for the provision of friendly benefits without fear of having them stolen. It could conduct its ordinary activities without fear of conspiracy charges. And finally it could do all these things without the disadvantages which many had feared might accompany them; for, in all cases in which a Union was illegal at Common Law, the courts of law were specifically prohibited from interfering in the internal affairs of the Unions so as to enforce any member's claims to benefit; and it was definitely laid down that agreements entered into between Trade Unions and employers' associations were not to be enforceable by law.

So far the Trade Unions appeared to have won a complete victory—for no one then anticipated the Taff Vale and Osborne Judgments. But there was another side to the Trade Union legislation of 1871. Together with the Trade Union Act the Liberal Government passed the Criminal Law Amendment Act. This Act not only repealed the Act of 1859, which had legalised peaceful picketing, but also made even more stringent and explicit the provisions against 'molestation', 'obstruction', and 'intimidation' laid down in 1825. The existence of Trade Unions was in fact recognised, and every facility given to them to operate as friendly societies dispensing out of work, sickness, and other provident benefits to their members. But at the same time the really vital part of their work, the conduct of collective bargaining backed by the threat of the strike, was made subject to more drastic restrictions than before. In effect the Government was offering the Trade Unions full recognition, on condition of their turning

practically into friendly societies, and renouncing all militant action.

The explanation of this double-edged concession lies partly in the tactics which the Trade Union leaders had themselves used before the Royal Commission of 1867. Determined to dissociate themselves from the perpetrators of the 'Sheffield Outrages', the London leaders, representing a few strong and closely organised societies of skilled craftsmen, had emphasised before the Commission the essential moderation of their policies, and had troubled their heads very little about the effect which their tactics might have on the rest of the Trade Union movement. The 'Amalgamated Societies' of highly skilled craftsmen earning relatively high wages were in a position to charge substantial weekly contributions to their members, and to provide substantial friendly benefits. They were already, in effect, as much friendly societies as Trade Unions; and in the desire to conserve their funds for benefit purposes they discouraged strikes whenever they could, and relied rather for their bargaining power on limiting the supply of skilled labour by controlling the number of apprentices.

These methods were impossible for Unions which set out to organise the less skilled as well as the skilled. They were not possible for the miners or the textile operatives, or indeed for any groups outside a few skilled crafts recruited by means of prolonged apprenticeship. The workers in general could not afford the high contributions which had to be paid if substantial friendly benefits were to be provided. They had not the same power to build up strong, centralised societies aiming at a practical monopoly of a particular kind of labour. Nor could it pay their employers to buy off their members by the concession of relatively high wages, in the same way as it might to buy the quiescence of a small number of skilled men holding key positions. Accordingly, the Amalgamated Societies were not typical of the Trade Union movement as a whole. The rest of the movement consisted largely of much more loosely organised Unions

with but few 'friendly' functions, and with the predominant purpose of demanding, and if necessary striking for, improved conditions. To Unions of this second type, the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871 meant disaster. Its consequences were indeed speedily seen in a number of prosecutions and convictions of Trade Union leaders—of the London gas-stokers in 1872, and of some of the most prominent miners' leaders in the next year or two. Even the men at the head of the Amalgamated Societies could see the danger. They wanted to discourage strikes; but they realised that the right to strike must be preserved if the power of collective bargaining was not to be lost. Accordingly all sections joined in demanding the repeal of the obnoxious Act; and in 1874 the Trade Unions threw their weight against every Liberal candidate who would not pledge himself to support their demands. The Trade Unions were not, probably, responsible for Gladstone's defeat; but their attitude helped to swell Disraeli's majority, and the new Conservative Government, after some attempts at evasion, promised them redress.

The outcome was the Trade Union legislation of 1875-6. The Criminal Law Amendment Act was replaced by the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act of 1875. The new Act was not wholly satisfactory; but it restored in a modified form the right of peaceful picketing, and it greatly softened the provisions dealing with molestation, obstruction and intimidation, so as to make ordinary strike activities fairly secure from suppression. In the following year the Trade Union Amendment Act modified the Trade Union Act of 1872 in a number of particulars, in accordance with the Trade Unions' desires; but these points were mostly technical, and the Act seemed to be of minor importance till one of its sections was invoked as the basis of the Osborne Judgment thirty years later.

By 1875 the legal position of the Unions seemed to have been firmly assured. Between 1875 and 1900 the Trade Union movement came but little into conflict with the law—even in the great strike wave of 1889 and the following

years; and the 'new' Unions of dockers, gas-workers, railwaymen, miners and general workers grew up in the belief that the right to strike and to organise was safe. Over the same period a number of Trade Unions, especially the miners, regularly engaged in political activity, financing candidates both for Parliament and for local bodies without any suspicion that the legality of their action could be questioned.

Then, in the new century, two successive legal decisions, both affirmed finally by the House of Lords, shattered the Trade Union positions. By the Taff Vale Judgment of 1901 it was decided that an employer—the Taff Vale Railway Co.—could recover damages from a Trade Union—the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants—for losses caused to it by a trade dispute. The A.S.R.S. had to pay over no less than £23,000 in damages to the company, and a still larger sum in costs; and the Judgment in effect destroyed the right to strike—for what Union would dare to engage in a strike if the outcome might be the wholesale confiscation of its funds?

The Trade Union movement found itself condemned to a period of industrial inactivity, despite the fact that real wages were falling as prices rose. It turned to political action for redress, and there began a nation-wide agitation for a new law that would reinstate the effective right to strike. Incidentally, this situation was the making of the Labour Party. The Miners' Federation indeed still held aloof, preferring to run its own candidates under Liberal-Labour auspices, as it had done since 1874. But the rest of the Trade Unions rallied round the new party; and in the General Election of 1906 the Labour Party emerged as a considerable force, with 29 seats of its own. In addition, most Liberals, in order to secure Trade Union support, had pledged themselves to the passing of legislation which would restore the right to strike and effectively safeguard Union funds.

The Trade Disputes Act of 1906 completely granted the Trade Union demands. It gave absolute protection to

Trade Union funds against actions for 'tort'—that is, for damages arising out of a civil wrong. The Taff Vale Judgment was entirely reversed. Moreover, the Trade Unions gained a further point; for henceforth no individual could be subjected to payment of damages on account of anything he might do in combination with other workers, unless an action would have lain against him if he had been acting alone. In effect, the Trade Disputes Act removed from the Trade Unions and from strike activity the last taint of illegality. Peaceful persuasion by picketing was fully legalised. There still remained the modified provisions against intimidation, etc., which had been enacted in 1875; but these were not felt to constitute a really serious grievance.

Immediately, however, a fresh blow fell. By the Osborne Judgment of 1909 the House of Lords decided that it was unlawful for a Trade Union to spend any of its money on political action, or, inferentially, upon any object not specifically mentioned in the Trade Union Act of 1876. This Judgment, which upset a long-standing practice, struck at the very foundations of the Labour Party, which drew most of its candidates and nearly all of its money from Trade Union sources. It struck equally at the Liberal-Labour candidatures financed by the Miners' Federation; and in 1909 the miners joined the Labour Party.

The movement had to wait until 1913 for redress. But at last the Trade Union Act of 1913 became law, and Trade Union political activity was made lawful.

This Act was not wholly satisfactory; but as in most Unions not very much use was made of the right to 'contract-out' of the political levy, the Labour Party was able to carry on with adequate money at its command. Apart from minor changes, such as the Trade Union Act of 1917, which made it easier for Trade Unions to amalgamate, the law relating to the movement remained unaltered from 1913 until after the General Strike of 1926.

The 'General Strike' was not, in fact, 'general'; for the Conference of Trade Union Executives which was convened by the Trades Union Congress General Council to take the responsibility for it called out in support of the miners only a limited group of workers in other vital industries. But it was general enough to be radically different from an ordinary sympathetic strike, in which one group of workers comes out in support of another to which it is closely related. It was an attempt, by stopping the vital industries and services, to compel the Government to arrange a satisfactory settlement of the miners' claims. Its legality was at once questioned, on the ground that it was not an industrial dispute, but an attempt to 'coerce the State', and therefore essentially 'political'. The best legal opinion held that this did not prevent it from being lawful, as nothing had been said in the Trade Disputes Act or elsewhere to differentiate between 'industrial' and 'political' strikes. But some judges and lawyers took a different view, and denounced the strike as a criminal conspiracy against the State.

This point is now only of academic interest; for when the strike had been defeated the Baldwin Government proceeded to pass the vindictive Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act of 1927, which is described in the next section.

The full effects of this punitive measure of 1927 have still to be seen; for during the past ten years there have been but few big strikes. This is partly because of the great depression of trade which set in gradually after the Wall Street panic of 1929; but it is also due in part to the fears engendered by the Act itself. Trade Unions leaders are aware that the right to strike, and especially the right to strike on any large scale, is now again hedged about with highly perilous restrictions; and they are reluctant, in face of a hostile Government, to face the risks involved. The Government, for its part, prefers not to invoke the Act in dealing with small disputes, in the belief that it inspires more terror unused, and that the attempt to use it might

well provoke a wave of Trade Union feeling comparable with that which practically created the Labour Party in the years following the Taff Vale Judgment.

Thus the rights which seemed to have been securely won in 1875, in 1906, and in 1913, have been largely lost, or are again in jeopardy; and new legislation is urgently needed to re-establish the effective rights of combination.

TRADE UNIONS AND THE LAW TODAY

by

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THE LEGAL DEFINITION of a Trade Union has altered from time to time, but it is now contained in the Trade Union Act of 1913, which provides that a Trade Union means any combination the principal objects of which are under its constitution the regulation of the relations between workmen and masters or between workmen and workmen or between masters and masters or the imposing of restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business, and also the provision of benefits to members. It will be observed that Trade Unions of employers as well as of workers are included, but it is not proposed to deal with these in this chapter. The ordinary functions of Trade Unions are well enough known to the average worker, but they involve many complicated and difficult legal decisions and statutes about which it is not easy to be either clear or dogmatic.

According to the Common Law of England any restriction in relation to a trade or business is what is called a restraint of trade and is normally illegal, as is any organisation which is formed for the purpose of imposing such a restriction. Most Trade Unions—having power, as they normally have, to strike, to compel members to come out on strike and such-like—are illegal organisations at common law and they owe their legal recognition and their rights and powers to various Acts of Parliament *plus* what

may be left of certain common law rights. The right of combination for legal purposes is recognised by the law in many ways. Price-fixing agreements, trade rings and the like are instances, in addition to Trade Unions, of legal combinations. The legality of the actions of such organisations raises difficult legal questions. The general position is that a combination wilfully to injure a person in his trade is actionable if damage results, but if the object of the combination is to forward or defend the interests of those who enter into the combination there is no wrong committed, even if the effect of the combination is to cause damage to a third party. There is therefore nothing illegal in a number of persons acting together to protect their trade interests provided they do not act unlawfully. The provisions with regard to what is unlawful are contained in the general law, but in relation to Trade Unions those most commonly complained of are contained in the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875, as amended by the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act of 1927. It is under these Acts (which are not by any means limited in their application to Trade Unionists or strikers) a *criminal* offence, triable by magistrates or before a jury, for a person wrongfully and without legal authority, with a view to compel another person to do or abstain from doing anything which such other person has a right to do or restrain from doing, to use violence to or intimidate that other person or his wife or children or persistently follow such other person, to watch or beset the house or other place where such person resides, or to follow such person in a disorderly manner. The Act of 1927 has extended the definition of 'intimidation' to an extent which it is impossible to define, as it now includes causing in the mind of a person any apprehension of injury to him or his family in respect of his business, occupation, employment or source of income. The extent of this new definition has not been decided by the Courts, but it contains alarming possibilities. In addition to this alteration of the law, by the 1927 Act the offence of 'watching and besetting',

has been extended beyond doubt to persons who attend in such numbers or otherwise in such manner as to be calculated to 'intimidate' any person in the house or place where that person resides or works or happens to be; this Act further makes it an offence for one or more persons to watch or beset a house for the purpose of inducing a person to work or abstain from working. It will be seen that picketing in strikes is fraught with more risk than was the case before 1927, and it would be a bold man who would be dogmatic as to what exactly the legal rights of pickets now are. It ought to be said, however, that there is still in existence a provision of the Trades Disputes Act of 1906 which makes it legal for one or more persons acting in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute to attend at or near a house or other place for the purpose of peacefully obtaining or communicating information or persuading a person to work or cease from working. The difficulty of the picket is to distinguish between the legality under the Act of 1906 and the illegality under the Act of 1927.

Apart from this, it is still, under the Act of 1875, a criminal offence for a worker wilfully and maliciously to strike in breach of his contract, if he has reasonable cause to believe that his action will endanger life, or cause bodily injury, or damage valuable property. This applies to all types of workers; but in addition it is an offence for employees of local authorities, gas, water and electricity undertakings to come out on strike *in breach of their contract* if there is reasonable ground for thinking that such action will cause injury, damage or public inconvenience.¹ In the ordinary case of an employee leaving work without proper notice he can only be sued for damages, but in the cases mentioned he may be fined or sent to prison.

¹ Gas and water undertakings (Conspiracy Act, 1875); Electricity undertakings (Electricity Supply Act, 1919); Municipal employees in general (Trade Unions Act, 1927).

CIVIL LIABILITY OF THE UNION

The Trade Union Act of 1871 was—and remains—the first legal charter of Trade Unions. It was thought that a Trade Union was a legal body which collected funds for all sorts of benevolent and industrial purposes and that these funds were immune from attack in the event of the wrongful or misguided action of any official. The Taff Vale decision shattered this belief; and the Act of 1906 was passed as a result of the agitation amongst the working class against this decision. That Act provided that no action for what lawyers call tort can be brought against a Trade Union at all. A tort in law is a wrong committed by one person in breach of a duty which he owes to that other person apart altogether from any contract between the parties. The negligent driving of a motorist, the publication of a libel and such breaches of duty are instances of what are known as torts. If, therefore, an official of a Trade Union in the course of his job, whether during a strike or not, commits a wrongful act, the Trade Union cannot be sued, nor can its funds be taken for damages. That is the effect of the immunity conferred upon Trade Unions by the Act of 1906. This is subject to an exception in the case of those strikes which are declared illegal by the Act of 1927, which will be explained later. It must be made quite clear, however, that the immunity provided by the Act of 1906 only exempts the Union and its funds from attack. It does not protect the individual who commits the wrongful act. There is nothing unlawful in a strike unless the strikers break their contract of employment, e.g. by leaving without proper notice. In such a case as the latter the individual strikers are liable to be sued for damages; and if the Union official has encouraged them to break their contract, then he would be liable for damages at Common Law. But a section of the Act of 1906 protects a Union official from such an action if the only complaint against him is that he has induced others to

break their contracts in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute—which means a dispute between employers and workmen or workmen and workmen relating to conditions of employment.

TRADE UNIONS AND REGISTRATION

The Act of 1871 as amended by an Act of 1876 made provision for the registration of Trade Unions and conferred certain benefits as a result of registration. A registered Trade Union may hold land by its trustees in its corporate capacity, the title to its property changes automatically with changes of trustees, and it has a summary power of prosecution of defaulting officials. A Trade Union need not register; and an unregistered Trade Union enjoys most of the privileges and is subject to most of the disabilities of a registered Trade Union.

Registration is effected by the deposit of copies of rules of the Union signed by at least seven members; and the rules *must* specify the registered office, the objects of the Union, the title to benefits, the fines and forfeitures and other matters specified in the regulations. The rules and regulations also make provision for dissolution and complete and partial alteration of rules.

POLITICAL OBJECTS

The shock which the Trade Union movement received by the Taff Vale decision was very largely remedied by the Act of 1906, and Trade Unionists hoped that their legal position was more or less secure and free from doubt. They reckoned without the lawyers. With the growing political interest of the working class Trade Unions were using their funds for the purpose of financing elections and similar political activities. The law stepped in and in an action against the Railwaymen's Union it was decided—finally by the House of Lords—in what is known as the Osborne Case—that a Union must restrict its activities to

the strictly industrial objects specified in the Acts of 1871 and 1876, and that the expenditure of funds on political purposes was quite illegal. The Act of 1913 was passed as a consequence of this decision, and this introduced a provision by which a Trade Union could pursue any lawful objects authorised by its rules; *but* it could only pursue such political objects as financing elections if such a course were approved by a ballot of its members taken in a specified manner, and if it adopted special rules for a political fund and a political levy and made ample provision for exemption of persons who did not wish to pay the levy. The machinery was cumbersome and technical and applied to Trade Unions only and not to other voluntary associations or companies, where a decision of the majority could usually be made to determine the use of the funds of such associations. Even this interference with Trade Unions was not enough, as by the Act of 1927 the position was made worse and, with the obvious object of crippling its political opponents, the Conservative Government provided that only members of Trade Unions who *volunteered* to contribute to a political fund were under an obligation to do so, and that persons who did not contribute must not be put under any disadvantage. That is the legal position at the present time. The use of the general funds of a Union for political purposes is therefore illegal, and political objects can only be financed by a Union whose rules have been specially approved for the purpose, and only out of funds contributed by those members who have signified their willingness in a particular form to contribute to such political funds.

THE 1927 ACT

The excuse for the passing of the 1927 Act was the National Strike of 1926. That Act dealt with a number of matters, some of which have already been referred to; but its provisions, effects and possibilities are so far-reaching that the Act deserves a special section of its own.

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The sponsors of the Act said that it aimed at making a general strike illegal. It actually provides that a strike is illegal if it has any object beyond a trade dispute in the industry in which the strikers are engaged *and* is designed or calculated to coerce the Government directly or by inflicting hardship on the community. Thus a strike to prevent the Government waging war with Russia would be illegal because it was not a trade dispute *and* was designed to coerce the Government; a strike of busmen in sympathy with a strike of miners (not being within the same industry) would be illegal if it were designed or calculated to coerce the Government *or* if it inflicted hardship on the community. In effect any political strike or large-scale sympathetic strike would be illegal. There are two further questions to be considered, viz. the effect of illegality, and the tribunals which decide the illegality. If a strike is illegal, then any person who declares, instigates or incites others to take part in it is liable to fine or imprisonment; but merely taking part in such a strike is not an offence. In addition, no Union funds must be used for such a strike, and no protection to Unions, Union officials or Union funds given by earlier statutes in connection with strikes will be of any value in an illegal strike. No person who refuses to take part in an illegal strike can be penalised by his Union. That is a short and general statement of the provisions of the 1927 Act with regard to general strikes. The question of illegality, of what constitutes the implication of 'hardship upon the community', who are the community, and what is a trade dispute will be decided by the High Court judges, whose predecessors, at any rate in times of crisis, have never shown that they were an ideal tribunal for the purpose.

In addition to other provisions, the Act of 1927 segregated Civil Servants in their own organisations. Trade Unionism in the Armed Forces is of course quite unheard of; by the Police Act of 1919 it was forbidden amongst the Police, and now by the Act of 1927 Civil Servants must be preserved from the taint of association with other workers

in order that they may serve the impartial State in the impartial manner in which impartial Civil Servants should. Therefore any organisation of Civil Servants whose primary concern is wages and conditions must organise Civil Servants only, and must comply with regulations made by the Crown to secure that it is independent of and not affiliated to any organisation whose membership is not limited in a similar manner; no Civil Servant must belong to any Trade Union except one of Civil Servants, and no political objects must be included. These regulations prevent Civil Servants from affiliating to the Trades Union Congress or to any Federation of Trade Unions other than a Federation of Civil Service Trade Unions.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Notice has already been called to the special provision of the Act of 1927 prescribing that in certain circumstances an employee of a Local Authority may be guilty of a criminal offence if he leaves work without proper notice. In addition to this provision the Act provides that no local or public authority may make it a condition of employment or continued employment that a man shall join or be a member of a Trade Union: nor may such an authority lay down a condition that a contractor with the Authority shall employ Trade Union labour.

GENERAL

The actual status of Trade Unions in law remains a question of extreme difficulty to lawyers. The measure of legality which is afforded by the legislation still leaves outside the operation of the law any matters which the law refused to recognise before the Act of 1871 and still refuses to recognise. If a Trade Union is, because of its rules, illegal at common law its members cannot sue the Union for benefits, the Union cannot sue the members for contributions, an agreement between two such Trade

Unions (whether of masters or men) cannot be enforced in the Courts. Readers will see that the taint of illegality still clings to Trade Unions and that they are subject to restrictions which do not apply to the ordinary voluntary association. In internal and domestic matters the Courts will not usually interfere, and the Courts will not as a general rule assist in the enforcement of the rules of the Union. If, however, it is proposed to use the funds of the Union for a purpose not authorised by the rules, or if a member is expelled from a Union where the rules give no power of expulsion or without a proper charge or hearing, or if a member is subjected to a penalty not provided by the rules, the Courts will interfere and prevent any such action.

There remain a number of minor and insignificant matters to which only general reference need be made. Trade Unions have certain legal powers to provide in their rules for nominations by members of death benefits. The Registrar of Friendly Societies has certain limited powers to deal with disputes; there are provisions as to amalgamation and detailed provisions as to registration, and penalties for non-compliance with the law as to financial returns of accounts to be made and as to failure to comply with other rules and regulations in connection with the management and administration of Unions. None of these give rise to any difficulty or call for any comment. The chief difficulties in legal matters affecting Trade Unions arise from the complicated general law of conspiracy and restraint of trade and the cumbersome and complicated Act of 1927. The student who desires to know more of these complications should consult legal textbooks, where he will find much more detail even if he does not find much more light.

TRADE BOARDS

by

J. J. MALLON

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TWO LINES OF approach lead to the Trade Board system of today. The first, beginning with the House of Lords reports on sweating, leads to the Act of 1909. The second leads to the Act of 1918.

(In the late 'eighties and 'nineties the House of Lords Select Committee on Sweating revealed conditions, particularly among women, in sweated trades which scandalised the public conscience. Nothing, however, was done; the public, presumably, managed to still its conscience. But the facts could not be entirely forgotten. A group led by Sir Charles Dilke kept the sweating problem alive in the public mind and in Parliament. Year by year from 1900 Dilke introduced a Trade Boards Bill to the House of Commons. The House failed to accept the measure.)

(In 1906 a special effort was made. A Sweated Industries Exhibition was held in London, which, by exhibits of sweated work and demonstrations by sweated workers, vividly portrayed the state of affairs. This was followed by similar exhibitions in the provinces, and the National Anti-Sweating League was formed. The League maintained an intensive campaign for legislation; and the position in Parliament became more hopeful with the return of a number of Labour members in 1906.)

(In 1908 the Bill, renamed the Sweated Industries Bill, was sponsored by Arthur Henderson, and given the

Labour Party's official blessing. In this year also the reports of the Census of Earnings and Hours revealed again the degraded conditions in the sweated trades. In 1909 the Government introduced the Bill which became the first Trade Boards Act.

The 1909 Act provided for Trade Boards only in trades where rates of wages were 'exceptionally low'. It was essentially an anti-sweating Act. The Amending Act of 1918 permits the establishment of Trade Boards in trades where "no adequate machinery exists for the effective regulation of wages throughout the trade" and where the Minister of Labour is of opinion that "having regard to the rates of wages prevailing in the trade or any part of the trade" a Trade Board is expedient. Here, consideration of wages is deliberately made of secondary importance; the stress is laid on the lack of negotiating machinery. Why this change of emphasis?

Before the end of last century successful efforts were being made to organise unskilled workers. Obviously the Unions' sphere of influence was growing; collective bargaining was being established as a recognised method. In 1896 the Conciliation Act empowered the Government to intervene, by way of conciliation only, in industrial disputes. It was held to be in the public interest that collective bargaining should be assisted to work efficiently. So the position remained until 1914.

During the war, the State established an extensive control of industrial relations. A considerable system of statutory Orders regulating wages was built up. The State became the dominant partner in three-sided negotiations. This was an emergency system; but it was desired that plans should be ready which would secure the ordered regulation of industrial relations throughout industry after the war. The Whitley Committee produced its scheme for Joint Industrial Councils for the well-organised trades; Interim Reconstruction Committees for trades likely to reach that status with the Ministry of Labour's assistance; and Trade Boards for trades where organisation

was inadequate for effective voluntary bargaining. Thus Trade Boards were to be no longer merely a weapon against sweating, but were to take their place in a comprehensive scheme for the regulation of industrial relations. In this spirit the Trade Boards Act of 1918 was passed.

Under the experimental 1909 Act, four Boards were immediately established. Four more were added in 1914, but the method of extending the Act was by Provisional Order, involving the passing by Parliament of confirming Acts. The 1918 Act not only altered the basis, but also substituted Special Order procedure. Special Orders applying the Acts to new trades must be laid before Parliament, but unless they are challenged (and so far they never have been) they automatically become operative. Before making a Special Order the Minister must give notice of its terms, and objections may be lodged. The Minister must amend the Order to meet these, or hold a public enquiry and take into consideration the recommendations resulting.

Between 1919 and 1921 thirty-three new Boards were established in twenty-nine trades (in four cases separate Boards were established for England and Wales and for Scotland). Plans for further extensions were well advanced; but the post-war depression brought a storm of criticism from sections of employers who blamed the Trade Boards for their difficulties, and the Government policy was reversed. Since 1921 only four new Boards have been established. The original Tailoring Trade Board (1910) was divided into three sections and so today (1938) there are forty-seven Trade Boards operating in forty-one trades. Most of these trades are of the smaller type, though several are on the fringe of big, organised industries. About one and a quarter million workers are covered by the Boards, of whom about 70 per cent are women.

Each Trade Board consists of an equal number of representatives of employers and workers in the trade, with three independent 'appointed members', one of whom acts as chairman. The appointed members are

chosen by the Ministry of Labour without consultation with either side. The employers' and workers' sides are also appointed by the Minister, but organisations of employers and workers in the trade are invariably invited to submit nominations.

The Minister requires that the sides should be representative of different areas, of the different sections and grades of workers, and of men and women workers separately. Subject to these conditions, the Minister normally accepts the organisations' nominees. Care is always taken that there is someone on each side who can act as spokesman, and this normally means that there is at least one—and usually more than one—full-time official. These members need not have had personal experience in the trade. The successful working of the Boards depends on the co-operation of trade organisations, and this fact dispels the illusion that the Trade Board rate is a blessing which comes from the Government without any effort by the Trade Unions. In fact, the officials of the trade organisations are responsible for preparing and presenting the cases of the two sides.

A Trade Board has a statutory obligation to fix minimum rates of wages for time-workers—known as 'general minimum time-rates'. In addition, the following rates may be fixed: (a) general minimum piece-rates, (b) piece-work basis time-rates, (c) special minimum piece-rates, (d) guaranteed time-rates, (e) overtime rates.

General minimum time-rates normally take the form of rates for adult men and women, together with scales of rates for juveniles, based on either age or experience, or on both. A single rate may be fixed for all adult men, and another for all adult women, with corresponding scales for juveniles, irrespective of occupation within the trade. Or special classes of workers may be defined, and rates fixed for each class. More than half the Boards have fixed rates for special classes.

Though two or three Boards have fixed extensive schedules of general minimum piece-rates, they have

not found general favour owing to the great variety of circumstances in the factories. A piece-price appropriate to one factory may be wholly inappropriate to another. The same piece-rate may yield an adequate return in a well-organised factory but not in a badly-organised factory.

This variety has been met by fixing piece-work basis time-rates, in terms of hourly rates, in relation to which each employer must fix his own piece-rates. The piece-rates must be so fixed that *in the circumstances of the case* they will yield to the *ordinary* worker not less than the equivalent of the basis rate. Piece-work basis time-rates are always higher than the corresponding general minimum time-rates, in order that the worker may receive some reward for extra effort. Where neither a piece-work basis time-rate nor general minimum piece-rates have been fixed, the appropriate general minimum time-rate serves as the basis for piece-prices.

Employers may require the Board to fix special minimum piece-rates, which apply only to the factory and the classes of workers specified. This option has been seldom exercised, and at the moment none exist.

Guaranteed time-rates may be fixed for workers on piece-work, but must not be higher than the corresponding general minimum time-rates. This power has not been much used. If the rates are fixed at a reasonable level from the ordinary worker's point of view, the older, slower workers tend to be driven out, while if the rate takes account of this, it is of no value to the ordinary worker.

The power to fix overtime rates, which nearly all Boards exercise, gives some indirect control over working hours. The Board declares a given number of hours to be the normal hours for the day or week (usually both) and fixes special, higher rates for hours in excess of the normal.

All rates may be fixed to apply uniformly over the whole country, or different area rates may be fixed. In practice area rates are fixed only in trades where the market is essentially local—for example, milk distribution, or

bespoke tailoring. The common practice is to fix national rates. Trade Boards may establish District Committees to advise them, but the power to fix rates is reserved to the Boards. Few Boards have established these Committees. Area rates can be fixed without them.

Conditions for securing instruction in the trade may be attached to learners' or apprentices' rates. Where a worker cannot earn a minimum rate through infirmity or physical injury, and cannot suitably be employed on piece-work, a Board may grant a permit enabling the worker to be employed at a stated lower rate.

Before fixing a rate a Trade Board must give two months' notice and consider any objections lodged. If at the fixing stage any substantial alteration is made, further notice must be given. A rate does not become operative until it is confirmed by the Minister of Labour, who may refer it back to the Board for reconsideration. He may not, however, himself alter a rate; he must accept or reject. The actual determination of the rate must be the act of the Board.

The procedure of varying or cancelling rates is the same as for fixing. The whole process takes from four to five months.

The Acts do not lay down any standard in accordance with which minimum rates must be fixed. Discussions on rate proposals at Board meetings are, with one important exception, much like wage-negotiations elsewhere. The cost of living, the state of the market, 'what the trade can bear', comparable rates in other trades, the skill required, and similar factors all play their part. The exceptional circumstance is the presence of the appointed members, who may vote for one side against the other, and thus determine the result. This role of arbitrator, however, is only the last resort, used where deadlock would otherwise occur. Appointed members are much more concerned to bring the parties to agreement. They will hold private conferences with each side, and arrange informal conferences between the leaders, seeking to find

a basis of agreement, or, if that proves impossible, to reduce the margin between the two sides to the minimum. The appointed members are helped in their role of conciliators by the awareness of the two sides of the Board that unless agreement is reached they may turn arbitrators and vote. Though occasionally criticism has been made of appointed members, it has not come more from one side than another, and on the whole the system has worked well.

Another factor facilitating negotiations is the growth of organisation on both sides. In many trades voluntary agreements providing higher rates or better conditions than those laid down by the Board have been negotiated. These agreements usually apply to areas or firms where Trade Unions have secured a footing. While the existence of statutory minima supports these agreements, they in turn suggest a basis for negotiations on the Boards. In two Trade Board trades the workers' and employers' organisations negotiate national voluntary agreements outside the Boards, subsequently putting the agreed rates through the Boards, and thus securing general compliance.

The Ministry of Labour provides a staff for Trade Board administration. One officer, with assistants, is secretary to all the Boards. As each Board is autonomous, no similar official link exists between the employers' and workers' sides of the several Boards. But special committees on Trade Boards are maintained by the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations and the Trades Union Congress.

Some sixty inspectors maintain an annual inspection of approximately 20 per cent of the establishments under Trade Boards. Every employer concerned receives a notice in poster form of the appropriate minimum rates and must display this in his establishment. He is also required to keep records of wages to show that he is complying with the Acts. Wages must be paid clear of all deductions except for statutory insurance schemes or for superannuation or provident funds authorised by Parliament. Even deductions otherwise legal under the Truck

Acts may not be made. Inspectors have the right to enter premises, to inspect wage-records and lists of outworkers, and to examine any person concerned. For breaches of the Acts employers are subject to criminal proceedings and may be fined in addition to being ordered to pay arrears of wages due. For making false records or knowingly giving false information, employers may be imprisoned. In practice they are normally warned and given an opportunity to pay arrears before proceedings are taken. In addition, workers can take civil proceedings to enforce payment of wages due. The low percentage of inspection has often been criticised. The Unions play a part in unofficially enforcing the Acts on their members' behalf.

The Acts may be withdrawn from any trade by Special Order procedure. So far no Order has been withdrawn, but the Grocery Trade Boards for England and Wales and for Scotland, established in 1920, were dissolved, after a very stormy passage, in 1926. The Special Order bringing the Grocery Trade under the Acts was not, however, withdrawn. Nominally the Acts still apply, but no Boards exist and no minimum rates operate.

In conclusion a word may be said concerning the attitude of the Trade Union movement. Trade Unions played a large part in the agitation which led to the first Boards. They supported the wide extension after the war. When, yielding to the criticism of some sections of employers, the Minister of Labour established the Cave Committee to enquire into the Acts, the Trade Unions concerned collectively gave evidence, through their Trade Boards Advisory Council, not merely supporting the system, but demanding wider powers for the Boards (1922). As the depression dragged on, however, criticism was heard in the Trade Unions. Organisers complained that workers under Trade Boards failed to appreciate the part played by the Unions, and were therefore difficult to organise. While the official attitude of the movement remained unchanged, a discord was apparent. In 1930 the Trade Boards Advisory Council set up its own Enquiry

Committee, and invited evidence from all Unions concerned. Its report, now the basis of T.U.C. policy, may be found in the Congress Report of 1931.

The conclusion of the Committee was that probably many workers argued that because there was a Trade Board to protect their wages there was no need for organisation. But whether, were the Trade Boards withdrawn, these workers would appreciate the need for organisation, or find other reasons against joining a Union, could not be said. The hard fact to be faced was that certain underpaid trades which had never had a Trade Board had failed to respond to repeated Trade Union appeals.

It was recognised that Trade Boards had had good effects, at first raising wage-levels, and during the depression checking their fall. If early Trade Board rates are compared with rates prevailing in 1906, striking results emerge. During the depression the existence of Trade Board rates probably had a real influence on the general wage-level.

Another important point which the enquiry brought out was that, where organisation was sufficient, wages and conditions better than those provided by the Boards could be obtained. Trade Board rates are *minimum* rates. That this principle really worked, the Committee found by the fact that Trade Union agreements improving on the Board's determinations existed in half the trades under the Acts. Organisation could extend these agreements to all.

One result of the enquiry is that each Trade Board is reviewed every three years by the Unions concerned, which consider whether it should be maintained. So far it has not been concluded that any Board should be abolished.

The principles finally laid down by the Committee deserve general acceptance. It was recommended—and the T.U.C. concurred—that “the establishment of further Boards should be proposed only after the most careful consideration of all the circumstances by the Unions

concerned. The Unions should be satisfied that the rates of wages prevailing in the trade under review are unduly low, and the conditions of the workers such as to necessitate urgent and statutory action. There should be no Trade Board in any trade in which adequate machinery for collective bargaining exists, or in which the circumstances are such that it is reasonable to expect that Trade Union organisation could be established."

Thus the first place is given to voluntary collective bargaining. On that basis the main framework of our system of industrial relations must be built. But there will be gaps due to the existence of trades not yet strong enough to take care of themselves. It is likely that, for as long as can be foreseen, Trade Boards will remain an important means of filling these gaps.

HOURS OF LABOUR

by

MICHAEL STEWART

Author of The Forty Hour Week.

I. THE POST-WAR REDUCTIONS

IN THE PRE-WAR period of the twentieth century there was little reduction in hours of labour. The energies of the Trade Unions were largely occupied in overcoming legal difficulties and maintaining the standard of life in face of a rising cost of living. The rate of increase in the production of wealth, which had been so rapid in the nineteenth century, had slowed down so that there was not, as there is today, a widespread belief in the possibilities of wealth and leisure. Hours ranged between 44 and 72 per week, though the figure for most workers was between 52 and 56. The war stimulated the mechanisation of industry and increased the confidence of the Trade Unions in their bargaining power; a demand for leisure was the natural reaction to wartime strain, and the growth of regulation and control of all kinds had weakened the hold of *laissez-faire* arguments on the public mind.

Accordingly, the years 1919 and 1920 saw great reductions in hours. On January 1st, 1919, the engineers and ship-builders began to work a 47-hour week, instead of 53 or 54 hours, and in most of the other metal-working industries similar reductions were secured. The railway workers obtained a 48-hour week in place of one of 50 or 60 hours, in February 1919, and the same figure was reached by tram and omnibus workers and by the textile,

boot and shoe, printing, cement, and leather industries. Shift workers in the iron and steel industry and in gas and electricity supply obtained 8-hour shifts, often in place of 12 hours. The Trade Boards, whose scope and powers had been increased by the 1918 Act, made 48 hours their standard time, beyond which higher wages must be paid. The builders followed in 1920 by securing a 44-hour week, though it was agreed in 1923 that this might be extended to 46½ hours during the summer. The progress of the miners is marked by successive Acts of Parliament. The 1908 Act had fixed 8 hours and one winding time (i.e. 8h. 40m. on the average) as the legal maximum for miners employed underground, and 9½ hours for firemen and some other workers. In 1919 these figures were reduced to 7 and 8 hours respectively. Agricultural workers before the war had worked 10 hours a day, exclusive of meal times, in the summer, and in the winter as long as the light permitted: by 1922 they had secured a normal week of from 48 to 54 hours.

These reductions were, with very few exceptions, effected without a reduction in earnings; and they constitute the most important industrial advance of the working-class movement in the twentieth century. Their total effect may be described by saying that 7 million people obtained an average reduction of 6 hours per week, or that there was, on the average, a 10 per cent reduction of working hours over the whole range of industry. The 48-hour week came to be regarded as a standard, but it was by no means universally adopted. In the first place the official figures relate to agreements between the Trade Unions and the employers' associations, and these were not binding on all undertakings. The cautious language of the Ministry of Labour provides a significant testimonial to the efficacy of organisation. "As the hours agreed upon are not necessarily binding on non-associated employers employing non-union workmen, cases will be found (especially in industries and districts in which the employers' and workpeople's organisations are not

strongly represented) in which hours in excess of those agreed upon are actually worked. It should also be noted that, in many of the less well-organised industries in which the hours of labour are not governed by collective agreements, the working week is probably longer, on the whole, than in the organised industries."

Secondly, there was widespread provision for overtime. This was usually paid at the rate of time and a quarter for the first two hours and time and a half thereafter; but while some industries allowed an initial period of overtime at the ordinary rate and then proceeded to time and a quarter, others started with the time and a half rate. There has not been any great change between pre-war and post-war practice; but the initial period at ordinary rates has become less common and the tendency to greater uniformity of overtime regulations has worked to the advantage of some districts and occupations. The reduction in the standard working week must not therefore be regarded as wholly a gain in leisure; to many workers its significance was the higher wage obtained when more of their work was paid at overtime rates. Another post-war development, however, was that an increasing number of industries imposed restrictions on overtime; in the building industry it was to be used only to meet urgent need; in engineering, shipbuilding, printing and some sections of the textile industry it was limited in amount, usually to 7 or 8 hours a week, with further provision for emergency. The position, a few years after the end of the war, may therefore be summarised as follows: among organised workers a standard 48-hour week; varying amounts of overtime so that the average of hours actually worked was perhaps about 52: among other workers, unascertainable, but certainly less favourable conditions prevailed.

II. LATER DEVELOPMENTS

Employers accepted this situation far more readily than they would have accepted a legal maximum working day;

for its elasticity enabled them to meet sudden increases in demand and to fulfil contracts to date. To all proposals for ratification of the Washington Eight Hours Convention they presented a united opposition; nor were the workers completely united in its support. The Convention prescribed a 48-hour week and an 8-hour day; but, given the Saturday half-holiday customary in Britain, an 8-hour day means about 44 hours a week—a further reduction on the post-war standard—and this point was not wholly met by the exceptions allowed. The chief ground for criticism of the Convention was, however, that legal regulation would destroy the elasticity which the British system, based on collective bargaining, permitted.

By 1924 it was clear that Britain was to carry, even in prosperous times, a burden of at least a million unemployed and that many of her foreign markets were lost; the situation was aggravated by the return to the Gold Standard in 1925. The recently won standard was vigorously attacked by those who held that it had raised costs and was a chief cause of Britain's balance of trade problem. In 1926 occurred the mining lock-out, the purpose of which was not only to lower wages but to compel the Government to alter the 1919 Seven Hours Act. The pre-war 8-hour maximum was restored despite the Samuel Commission's declaration that this would not improve the position of the industry. (In 1930 the Labour Government, seeking to repeal the 1926 Act, was obliged to compromise on 7½ hours.) The six months' resistance of the miners was a warning to other employers that any general assault on hours would be costly and dangerous, and they turned their attention to the possibility of reducing costs by mechanisation and improved organisation. Since 1924 output per worker has risen by 30 per cent, so that it cannot be maintained that the gain in leisure was a luxury beyond Britain's means. This figure is, of course, an average, and in some industries the reduction in hours made a permanent addition to costs; but the comment of the Samuel

Commission was applicable to the whole problem. The proper lines for British policy were the re-equipment of her industries and the replanning of her whole economy in view of a loss of foreign markets which no practicable reduction in costs would recover. Apart, therefore, from the miners, the post-war standard has been maintained to the present day. In 1927, and again during 1931 and 1932 there were some increases, but these have been more than offset in the last two or three years. The increased use of the shift system—which has sometimes made possible a week of between 30 and 40 hours—the policy of some employers and the tenacity of the miners in 1926 contributed to this result.

III. LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

Reference has been made to the legal restriction of the hours of underground work in coal mines. This is the only example, in industry, of such a restriction on adult male workers. The Trade Boards, by fixing a normal week for which the legal minimum is to be paid, exert an indirect influence on hours, and the 1912 Shops Act secures the benefit of a weekly half-day holiday for men and women shop assistants. But from the beginning of factory legislation to the present day the chief concern of the law has been the protection of women and young persons, i.e., those under 18. The 1937 Factories Act which came into force on¹ July 1st, 1938, consolidates the law as follows:

The total *hours of work* for women and young persons are limited to 9 per day¹ and 48 per week; the whole period of employment including mealtimes must not be more than 11 hours per day, to be fitted in between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. There must be no work after 1 p.m. on Saturday, nor any work on Sunday.

There must not be more than $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours *continuous work* without an interval of at least half an hour for rest and a

¹ 10 per day where a 5-day week is operated.

meal, though a 5-hour spell is allowed if it contains a 10-minute interval.

Overtime is permitted to meet pressure of work, but even then the hours of actual work must not exceed 10 per day, nor may the whole period of employment exceed 12, to be fitted in within the limits mentioned above, except that women may go on till 9 p.m. There may not be more than 6 hours overtime a week, nor more than a hundred hours a year.

The *discretion given to the Home Secretary* is considerable: he may increase the provision for overtime in seasonal occupations, or reduce it if an inquiry shows that any class of factory does not need the full amount: he may permit shiftwork outside the usual hours, for boys in the iron and steel, paper, and glass industries; he may ~~revoke~~ the provisions concerning spells of work, hours per day, or the time limit for the period of employment where the "customs and exigencies of the trade" require it; finally, all the provisions with regard to hours may be modified in unforeseen emergencies.

The rules for *young persons under 16* are more stringent. They must cease work by 6 p.m. and may not work more than 44 hours per week unless the Home Secretary gives special permission for 48. They may not be employed on overtime or shift work, nor do any of the special exceptions apply to them.

The Act covers all kinds of factories and workshops, and extends similar rules to young persons employed as errand boys and the like, outside the factory.

The 1934 Shops Act, which began to take full effect immediately after Christmas 1936, limits the hours of young persons employed in connection with retail trade to 48 per week. These are to be worked between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., though boys over 16 may start delivery rounds at 5 a.m., and in the catering trade, and for work in theatres, a later limit is allowed for boys and girls over 16. The Home Secretary has power to require that hours shall be so arranged that the young people have time for education

and recreation. Overtime up to 12 hours a week and 50 a year is allowed, but only to meet seasonal and exceptional needs, and for not more than six weeks in the year. Some relaxation of the overtime limits is allowed for the catering trade, and in the business of selling aircraft, motor and cycle accessories, the standard 48 hours may be averaged over a period of three weeks. For the purpose of the weekly half-day holiday every young person employed in connection with retail trade is regarded as a shop assistant.

The chief defect of the present law, the abundance of exceptions and the wide Ministerial discretion which it permits, is partly, no doubt, necessary in a Capitalist economy, but it makes enforcement more difficult.

From this survey it appears that the total hours fixed by law for women and young persons are the same as the normal standard established by collective bargaining for men—the special characteristics of the latter's position being their liability to nightwork and greater opportunities for overtime. It is well known that in the early days of factory legislation the force behind the demand for restrictions on female and child labour was a desire to limit all hours. This desire has been achieved, partly because some industries are largely dependent on the women and young persons, and because each advance made by these protected persons has set a definite goal for other workers to reach. But the legal restriction of hours of all workers, as a general principle, is still not admitted into our law. British opinion about the Washington Convention has been described; the success of the Trade Unions in maintaining the standards secured in 1920 made legislation seem less necessary, and the keenness of foreign competition strengthened the employers' desire to preserve the traditional elasticity.

IV. THE INTERNATIONAL FORTY-HOUR WEEK MOVEMENT

The recuperative powers claimed for Capitalism were manifested to a remarkable degree between 1924 and 1929, and despite the economic unsoundness which the

slump was to reveal, the possibility of real progress was implied in the fall in costs of production due to the application of scientific knowledge to industry and agriculture. Here was as solid a justification for shorter hours as ever the nineteenth century had produced. In the U.S.A. this progress was particularly noticeable, and there also occurred many experiments with hours of labour. Opinion was thus becoming favourable to reduction in hours when a special impetus was added by the slump. Men argued that if their economic system did not know what to do with the wealth it produced, they could at least refrain from production and have leisure instead; or, that when there was not enough work it ought to be more equally shared. This frame of mind was not altogether logical, and some of the advocates of shorter hours did not make it clear whether they were demanding reduction of hours with reduction of wages—i.e. a system of organised short time—or a straightforward shortening of the working week as a measure of social improvement. But despite this confusion there was no doubt that by 1932 a popular movement for a Forty-Hour Week had developed, capable of presenting reasoned arguments and supporting them with the practical experience of numerous employers in the U.S.A., Britain and elsewhere.

The International Labour Organisation provided the movement with publicity, and with the facilities for obtaining facts and turning an aspiration into a series of practical proposals. This body, set up side by side with the League of Nations, had won a deserved prestige by the excellence of its staff and the progress achieved in raising the labour standards of backward countries. It was coming to be regarded as the instrument by which international economic policy could be framed, and, unlike the League, it enjoyed the permanent co-operation of the U.S.A.

At the 1932 I.L.O. Conference the Italian Government brought forward the question of the Forty-Hour Week, but the hostility of the employers' representatives and some Governments, notably the British, prevented any definite

action till 1935. In that year a Draft Convention was adopted which approved the principle of a Forty-Hour Week, and further Conventions have since been adopted which prescribe how the principle is to be applied to Public Works and to the Textile Industry; Conventions on Iron and Steel, Printing, Chemicals, Building and Mines are drafted but not yet adopted. It must be understood that the I.L.O. Conference has no power of compulsion; the adoption of a Convention—for which a two-thirds majority vote is necessary—merely means that the Convention is available for ratification by such States as wish to be bound by it.

While these discussions proceeded the economic situation changed; the slump became less acute, and side by side with a mass of unemployment in some industries, others developed all the signs of a boom and began to suffer from shortage of labour. Less was heard of the need to share out a limited supply of work, and the problem began to appear in its true light. The case for a Forty-Hour Week was seen to rest on the indisputable fact of increased production per worker. The slump had brought the question of hours to the front, but the idea persisted throughout the years of recovery. The actual dates at which Governments have enforced new restrictions on hours have been determined more by the fortunes of political parties than by the movement of the trade cycle. The electoral victories of the *Front Populaire*, Roosevelt, and the New Zealand Labour Party provided the opportunities for taking a step justified by the economic development of a decade.

Constitutional difficulties in the U.S.A. have not prevented the labour codes from having a permanent result; although hours have varied a good deal since 1932, the average given in official figures is now 41 as against 48 for 1929. The French Government, under the Act of June 1936, imposed the Forty-Hour Week by a series of decrees on the coal, engineering, metal, textile, and railway industries till nearly 4 million workers were affected. There

was a rise in costs of production which contributed to France's financial difficulties; but it is far from the truth to suggest, that the French Forty-Hour Week has proved disastrous. No further extensions of it are as yet likely¹; but the benefits mark a definite advance in French working-class standards. The main lesson to be learnt from the French experience is that economic circumstances justify a reduction of hours, but that it is difficult for one nation to establish a Forty-Hour Week by itself. The success of the New Zealand Government in maintaining since September 1936 a Forty-Hour Week for factories and a Forty-four-Hour Week for shops, is further evidence of the desirability of reduction.

Britain's dependence on international trade, and the comparatively high standards which her Trade Unions have achieved make it particularly to her interest that hours should be limited by international agreement; and the persistent obstruction by the British Government is on that account all the more deplorable. British Labour has important tasks at home; the enforcement of the Factory Acts requires vigilance: in the newer industries—particularly some forms of road transport, where the hours are notorious—the workers need organisation if they are to obtain even the hours prevailing elsewhere. But any general advance comparable to that of 1919–20 will, in all probability, have to be made internationally. The present time may not appear favourable to international projects; but if the nations avoid war, it will be by the development of a common economic policy in which reduction of hours will be included.

¹ It has now [June 1938] been considerably modified; but a maximum of 2000 hours a year is still enforced. The problem has been complicated by the exceptional demands of the armament industries.

THE UNEMPLOYED

by

WAL HANNINGTON

Secretary, National Unemployed Workers' Movement,
 Author of *Unemployed Struggles*, 1919-1936

UNEMPLOYMENT WAS ALREADY a major problem before the war, though it had never reached the figures which the ruling class accepts today as normal. Yet outside the benefits of the Trade Unions and the Friendly Societies there was no relief for the unemployed, until the National Insurance Act (Part II) of 1911. This was a tripartite scheme, with weekly contributions of $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ from employer and worker, and $1\frac{2}{3}d.$ from the State. Benefit payable was 7s. per week for men and women over 18, and 3s. 6d. for youths between 17 and 18. There was no dependants' benefit. The scheme was limited to $2\frac{1}{2}$ million workers in certain selected trades.

During the war the Government promised 'a land fit for heroes', but it made plans for what it really expected—mass unemployment. Ex-servicemen were to receive an unemployment allowance, although they were uninsured. In 1916 the insurance scheme was extended and now covered $3\frac{3}{4}$ million workers. Shortly before the close of the war a special State allowance was arranged, for ex-servicemen and civilians alike, insured and non-insured.

This 'out-of-work donation' lasted from November 1918 until November 1919 for civilians and March 1921 for ex-servicemen. Males over 18 got 29s. and females 25s. In addition an allowance was paid of 6s. for the first and 3s. for each additional child.

Undoubtedly the scheme was meant less as a recognition of the right of the unemployed to a decent existence, than as an antidote to civil strife. When the 'donation' for civilians expired in November 1919 the Government raised the scales from 7s. to 11s. for insured persons over 18, with half allowances to those between 17 and 18. But no extension was made in the insurance scheme, and therefore more than two-thirds of the workers remained uncovered by it.

However, unemployment was not very acute until the beginning of the big slump in 1920. A new Act, which came into operation in November 1920, brought an additional 8 millions within insurance and raised benefits to 15s. for men and 12s. for women. These scales, though far in advance of the original rates, were far below the scales of the out-of-work donation, and utterly inadequate at current prices to meet the barest needs of existence.

The first big clash between the unemployed and the authorities took place in October 1920, when a great demonstration went to support a deputation of London Labour Mayors, who were interviewing the Prime Minister on unemployment. Large forces of mounted and foot police drew their batons and charged the unemployed in an effort to clear Whitehall. The bitter fighting in this clash came as a shock to many people.

The need for a definite organisation became apparent. Already there had sprung up numerous unemployed ex-servicemen's organisations, but these were local bodies, which merely marched the streets with collecting-boxes, treating their unemployment as a subject for charity.

Amongst the unemployed there were now many ex-shop stewards, who saw the need for organising the unemployed on working-class lines, (1) to establish the right to work or full maintenance, (2) to prevent employers from using the unemployed to reduce wages.

In April 1921 a conference of local unemployed organisations established the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. The collecting-box practice had been broken

down, and the unemployed were now in full cry against the Government, with the slogan of 'Work or Full Maintenance'. The N.U.W.M. directed a campaign against the Boards of Guardians (the bodies responsible for Poor Law Relief) to demand relief for all unemployed. This was in fact against the law, as, legally, able-bodied persons could only obtain out relief by entering the work-house, or performing task work.

With the slogan 'Go to the Guardians', the unemployed were set marching all over the country. Soon this persistent pressure everywhere compelled Boards of Guardians to grant outdoor relief to all applicants. By June 1922 the Government had to concede the principle, and attempted to bring some uniformity into the scales of the Boards of Guardians.

Violent conflicts on the streets with the police compelled the Government again to raise the unemployment insurance scales in March 1921 to 20s. for males, and 16s. for females. This Act also brought in the system of 'uncovenanted benefit', by which a claimant could receive benefits beyond the statutory limits.

From the very beginning the N.U.W.M. had made efforts to get the official Trade Union and Labour movement to take over this organising work. The N.U.W.M. leaders all had excellent records as Trade Unionists, and were anxious that the unemployed should be organised under the wing of the Trade Union movement. But there was definite official opposition to this mainly on the ground that the unemployed were catered for by the Trade Unions. But, firstly, the Trade Unions embraced less than a third of the workers in industry; secondly, many men had enlisted young, had not after demobilisation entered any industry, and therefore were not able to join any Union; thirdly, the Unions had their hands full in trying to meet the employers' new offensive; fourthly, the Unions were not equipped to give daily attention to grievances at Labour Exchanges and Relief Offices.

Obviously a special organisation was wanted, as part of the official Labour Movement. Labour leaders, however,

left the unemployed to create their own protective organisation.

Labour representatives on Municipal Councils and Boards of Guardians were, however, extremely helpful. Outstanding is the case of the Labour-controlled Poplar Borough Council, which, whilst granting relatively good scales of relief, led the demand for Government aid to local authorities. The Government demanded that relief scales be substantially reduced. The Poplar Council was particularly singled out in the capitalist Press, and the term 'Poplarism' was coined to signify extravagant expenditure. The Poplar Councillors hit back by refusing to pay certain sums due to the L.C.C. until the Government had come to the aid of the poor localities. This led to the arrest of the Poplar Councillors. They were imprisoned for six weeks, during which time the unemployed conducted an intense agitation demanding their release. This fight compelled the Government to rush through a temporary Act, whereby the burden of relief in London was more evenly distributed through the Metropolitan Poor Fund.

In April 1922 a new Unemployment Act introduced what became known as the 'gap'. All claimants to uncovenanted benefits were now to have alternative periods of five weeks on benefits and five weeks off. This met with a tremendous opposition, which compelled the Government after the first gap period to reduce it to one week in five.

The N.U.W.M. now organised the first great national Hunger March on London, which started in October 1922. While the marchers were on the road, a new Government, under Bonar Law, took office, with a plan for reducing expenditure on unemployment. The national Hunger March prevented this.

While the marchers were in London, the N.U.W.M. and the T.U.C. reached an agreement to organise a great day of joint national demonstration. This unity developed still further by a joint committee. An unemployed charter

was laid down, and throughout 1924 and 1925 big united demonstrations were organised.

After the General Strike the T.U.C. disavowed all connection with militant activities and disbanded the Joint Advisory Committee. Since then all big unemployed agitations have had to be led by the N.U.W.M. and have been dubbed 'unofficial' activities.

During 1927 the plight of the Welsh mining areas became very acute. Little more than formal protests came from official Labour and the unemployed themselves had to take action. In November a special unemployed miners' march from South Wales was organised by the N.U.W.M., each man carrying a miner's lamp—a symbol of their dangerous trade. These lighted miners' lamps, swinging in rhythm to the step of the Hunger Marchers as they entered the towns *en route* in the dusk of the evening, created a profound impression. The march so dramatised the plight of the Welsh mining communities that Neville Chamberlain, then Minister of Health, was moved to proclaim: "Such conditions of destitution are without parallel in the memory of living persons, the devastation in the coal-fields can only be compared with the war devastation of France".

But still the Government failed to take effective steps. The march certainly compelled a relaxation in the administration of the benefits and relief, and the Lord Mayor of London opened a special 'Relief Fund', which realised over a million pounds. But this was mere tinkering.

Unemployment Insurance has had a stormy career. Numerous Acts have been passed, changing scales and regulations. Every improvement has been the result of organised agitation. Periods when agitation has flagged have been eagerly seized upon for attempts to lower standards.

The Act of March 1921 had raised benefits to 20s. for men and 16s. for women, but in June another Act reduced them to 15s. and 12s. In the following November the

Government was compelled to introduce for the first time dependants' benefits, of 5s. per week for one adult dependant and 1s. for each dependant child.

The first Labour Government in 1924 raised the benefits to 18s. for men, 15s. for women, and 2s. for each dependant child. The adult dependants' benefit of 5s. remained unchanged.

In 1928 the Tories lowered the benefit for a man to 17s., but raised the adult dependants' benefit to 7s. The second Labour Government added another 2s. to the adult dependants' benefit, and raised the scale for juvenile unemployed between 17 and 19 by amounts ranging between 4s. and 2s., according to age.

The National Government in 1931 immediately imposed a 10 per cent cut in claimants' benefits, and reduced the adult dependants' benefits from 9s. to 8s. Men now got 15s. 3d., and women 13s. 6d.; and juveniles suffered corresponding reductions.

Numerous changes have also been made in the administrative regulations. Again and again the Government has been compelled to extend the periods of uncovenanted benefit for large bodies of unemployed who had exhausted their statutory benefits.

A change, which caused intense agitation amongst the unemployed, was the 'not genuinely seeking work' clause of the 1928 Act. All unemployed were held to be 'not seeking work' unless they could prove the contrary. Men were driven to a useless round of daily tramping from place to place in an effort to obtain notes from employers to show that they applied for work. Often employers would not give notes to every caller, and even claimants with these notes were frequently denied benefit because of 'insufficient evidence'.

Hundreds of thousands were robbed of benefits by this pernicious clause, and to the astonishment of the unemployed it continued under the Labour Government until a bitter agitation, including a National Hunger March, secured its abolition in March 1930.

In October 1931 the National Government not only cut the scales, but also introduced the Means Test, which, with slight modifications, continues today. Under this the maintenance of unemployed persons is made the responsibility of their relatives, by assessing the resources of all members of the family living together. It has produced an average saving of £10 million per year to the Government.

Tremendous opposition was organised by the N.U.W.M. against the Means Test and the cuts. Towards the end of 1931 and throughout 1932 huge demonstrations took place, and clashes between the unemployed and the police became an almost daily occurrence. In 1932 over 400 members of the N.U.W.M. were imprisoned. In November 1932 another National Hunger March took place, and bitter street fighting occurred three times in one week, when the marchers, supported by thousands of London workers, sought to present their million-signature petition against the Means Test.

Another great National Hunger March, organised by the N.U.W.M. in February 1934, compelled the Government to restore benefit scales to the standards laid down by the Labour Government in 1930, and to pass the Special (Distressed) Areas Act.

A 1934 Act introduced a new system whereby all claimants for 'transitional' benefit (i.e. who had exhausted their statutory benefits), along with all able-bodied unemployed dependant on Public Assistance (Poor Law) Relief, came under a new body—the Unemployment Assistance Board.

This part of the Act was to commence operation on January 7th, 1935, and it carried with it the most savage reductions in benefit yet attempted. It met with terrific organised opposition from the unemployed and the general Labour movement.

The Government was shaken so severely that in less than one month it retreated ignominiously, and was compelled not only to withdraw the new U.A.B. scale cuts but to make retrospective payments for the cuts already taken.

Seventeen months passed before the Government dared to reintroduce the new U.A.B. scales. In July 1936 the scheme was revived with certain modifications, and fixed to come into operation in November. The N.U.W.M. prepared another Hunger March, the biggest of all. Although the Labour Party and T.U.C. leaders again frowned on the march, local support exceeded all previous experience. Many prominent leaders associated themselves in a personal capacity with it, including Mr. Attlee, who spoke in Hyde Park, when a quarter of a million London workers turned out to welcome the marchers.

A deputation of forty-nine marchers secured a conference with the Minister of Labour, which resulted in the new regulations again being suspended for two months, and a promise that the cuts would be spread over eighteen months.

The position now (April 1st, 1938) under the two schemes is as follows:—

Insurance Benefit Scale

Workers of the age of 21 and under 65:	men 17s., women 15s.
" " " 18 " " 21:	men 14s., women 12s.
" " " 17 " " 18	boys 9s., girls 7s.
" " " 16 " " 17:	boys 6s., girls 5s.
Adult dependant,	10s.
Each child dependant,	3s.

U.A.B. Scale

For the householder and the householder's wife or husband: 24s.

For the householder where the above scale does not apply.
male 16s., and female 15s.

For members of the household, where the above scale does not apply:

if aged 21 or over—	male 10s., female 9s.
if aged 16 years, but less than 21 years:	8s.
" 14 " " " 16 "	6s.
" 11 " " " 14 "	4s. 6d.
" 8 " " " 11 "	4s.
" 5 " " " 8 "	3s. 6d.
if under the age of 5 years,	3s.

Where the household consists of only one child in addition to not less than two adults, the amount allowed in respect of that child shall not be less than 4s.

This scale is subject to deductions or complete disallowance under the Means Test.

The struggles of the past seventeen years have shown the necessity for unemployed organisation. In 1928 the T.U.C. started to organise the unemployed under Trades Councils. This scheme has been a failure; few associations have been formed, and they have never led any of the unemployed agitations. The N.U.W.M. has been the force behind all the struggles. What is the explanation? Firstly, it has a militant policy, which alone fits the peculiar position of the unemployed. Secondly, it unites the unemployed through local branches, District Councils, a National Administrative Council, and National Conferences, which elect the national leadership. It is a self-contained non-party organisation, financed by a membership contribution of one penny per week.

The F.U.C. unemployed associations (which have the same dues) are purely local bodies and are trammelled by rules which restrict activity. They are subject to the 'black circular', which discriminates against Communists and left-wing adherents. Very infrequently a formal circular on some unemployment question is issued by the T.U.C.; but there is no leadership for militant activity. Not unnaturally these associations are regarded less as organs of leadership than as small unemployed social clubs.

In addition there are a number of local unemployed clubs, especially in the Distressed Areas; and there are numerous unemployed social service centres, cunningly sponsored by the Government to keep the unemployed quiet. Also certain Trade Unions organise their unemployed in special sections, which remain unconnected with the rest of the organised unemployed.

With such a position it is not surprising that the vast majority of the unemployed remain completely unorganised. This disunity seriously endangers the interests of both employed and unemployed. Every unemployed person should, unquestionably, be a member of his appropriate Trade Union, but in addition the unemployed should be organised in a movement able to defend them against

injustices in the administration of the U.A.B. and unemployment insurance, and lead them in their efforts to obtain better treatment.

Now it is not practical politics to propose that the T.U.C. associations should dissolve and come into the N.U.W.M., or that the N.U.W.M. disband in favour of the associations with their present constitution and black circular. That would still leave the unemployed disunited, and without proper organisation and leadership.

The N.U.W.M. suggests that the T.U.C. should convene a representative conference of all existing unemployed organisations. The objective should be one united unemployed movement, with local, district and national machinery. The unemployed movement should be affiliated to the Trades Councils, the National Labour Party, and the T.U.C. It should elect its own National Committee for directing the movement, in conjunction with the T.U.C. The National Committee could in fact become a department of T.U.C. headquarters. Such unity would give new hope and inspiration to the vast masses of the unemployed.

One final word. Remember that the Nazis found a basis among the German unemployed. Today the British Fascists are getting to work among our unemployed, and if only to keep them loyal to the working-class movement we must unite all unemployed for the common fight against poverty and Fascism.

THE SHOP STEWARDS' MOVEMENT

THE SHOP STEWARDS' movement, and the workers' committee movement which arose out of it, were war-time developments. In their brief hour of glory they seemed to promise—or to threaten—a fundamental transformation of Trade Union policy and methods of organisation. And then, within a year or two of the end of the war, though shop stewards remained—and remain today—the shop stewards' movement faded.

Why was this? There had been, in a number of skilled trades, shop stewards long before the war. Naturally so; for a shop steward is simply a worker chosen by his fellow-workers in a particular workshop to represent them on matters peculiar to that workshop. What the 'father of the chapel' is to the printers, the shop steward is to the workers in any of a number of skilled factory trades, especially in the engineering and shipbuilding industries.

It seems natural enough that workers, even when they look to the national and district machinery of their Trade Unions to deal with such matters as the standard rates of wages and the standard working hours, should need in each particular factory or workshop someone on the spot to deal with immediate and special issues as they arise. Full-time Trade Union officials are few and cannot be everywhere at once; nor can they have a detailed knowledge of conditions in each factory. It therefore seems appropriate for the workers to choose someone, or some few, out of their own number in each establishment to speak on their behalf to the management, and to represent the

Union upon matters that relate to a particular factory or working group. The miners largely use for this purpose the checkweighman whom they are entitled by law to elect in each separate colliery, primarily to check the weights of coal brought to the surface, in order to ensure that each hewer is credited with the correct piecework payment. The checkweighman becomes a sort of shop steward for the miners at a particular pit, and deals with many grievances that have nothing to do with the weighing of the coal. The miners elect and pay him, nominally quite apart from the Union; but he becomes in practice a sort of pit representative of the Union.

In most industries, however, there is no one analogous to the miners' checkweighman—no full-time representative of the workers attached to a particular factory. Trade Unions try, as far as possible, to establish standard rates of wages and standard working hours over a whole district, or even on a national basis. They establish, as a rule, no special negotiating machinery for each particular establishment. They are, indeed, often hostile to workshop machinery, for fear that it may be so used as to undermine the standard rates and conditions laid down on a uniform basis for wider areas. Their willingness to recognise shop stewards or workshop delegates was for a long time limited in many cases to authorising stewards to proselytise for members and to see that members paid their contributions regularly—but not to undertake any organising functions at all. Their fears were the stronger because sometimes employers set up Workshop Committees and elected delegates inside the factory as a means of keeping Trade Unionism out of their establishments. Workshop Committees often savoured of 'company unionism'; and the whole idea of workshop organisation was accordingly suspect in the minds of many Trade Union leaders.

Nevertheless, even before the war shop stewards chosen by the skilled workers existed in a number of engineering establishments, and did negotiate to a certain extent about

piece-work prices and other workshop issues not covered by the terms of collective agreements between the Trade Unions and the employers' associations. But these pre-war stewards were not very important, except in Woolwich Arsenal and a few other places; and a very large number of workshops, even in the engineering industry, had no shop stewards at all.

The war speedily altered this situation. In the first place, it disarmed the official Trade Unions, which first pledged themselves voluntarily against strike action during the war, and then were made subject to the prohibition of strikes under the Munitions of War Act, 1915. This meant that, if grievances became serious enough to provoke strike action, the workers had to act under unofficial leadership; and this leadership was naturally supplied by delegates chosen by rank-and-file workers in the various factories. Secondly, from the very beginning of 1915 the urgent need for more munitions was causing drastic changes in workshop practices, including the replacement of skilled workers by semi-skilled or unskilled men or by women; and in every factory engaged on war work the consequent adjustments led to constant friction and necessitated direct discussion with chosen representatives of the actual workers employed. Later on, a third factor became no less important. From the introduction of conscription in March, 1916, there was continual friction over the 'release' for the Army of skilled workers who had been employed in munition-making; and as the demands of the Army grew greater, while hostility to the war increased (particularly after the Russian Revolution of March, 1917) this friction became more serious, and issued in a stronger resistance to the increasing 'dilution' of labour and the 'combing-out' of men fit for military service.

The shop stewards' movement originated and developed as a response to these three needs. As a movement it began on the Clyde—with the engineers' strike of February 1915. This strike, called without the endorsement of the Trade Unions, was led by a body called the 'Central

Withdrawal of Labour Committee', consisting partly of shop stewards recognised by the Trade Unions for the limited purposes already described, and partly of delegates chosen for the particular emergency by the workers in the various shops. After the strike this body, instead of disbanding, re-formed itself as the Clyde Workers' Committee, and set out to create an unofficial rank-and-file organisation in every engineering workshop in the Clyde area.

The Clyde example soon proved to be contagious; and shop stewards' movements and Workers' Committees were established in a number of other districts—notably Sheffield, Manchester and London. At first, the stewards were almost exclusively representative of the skilled tradesmen and were chiefly active in resisting the dilution of skilled labour. But when dilution had been perforce accepted, and the problem was that of regulating the conditions under which it should be extended, the movement spread in a number of areas to the less skilled workers, and Workers' Committees were set up, claiming to represent much more effectively than the Trade Unions the entire body of workers employed. This wider development, however, did not become universal. Even at its height, the shop stewards' movement was much more fully representative of skilled than of less skilled workers. It never included the women to any appreciable extent.

The Clyde Workers' Committee, though it remained active to some extent throughout the war, had its power largely broken by the imprisonment or deportation of its principal leaders. The leadership of the movement tended, after the Clyde deportations of March 1916, to pass to other areas. In November 1916 the Sheffield engineers by an unofficial strike secured the return of a skilled man who had been taken into the Army; and a powerful Sheffield Workers' Committee developed. In this month the first attempt was made to link up the various local shop stewards' organisations into a national movement. A conference representing a number of districts

set up a national shop stewards' committee. In May 1917 a more representative gathering, under the inspiration of the Russian Revolution, created a more ambitious movement; but it was not until January 1918 that the National Shop Stewards' Council became fully organised, on a basis wide enough to include a large proportion of the less skilled workers together with the skilled.

The war-time strikes of the engineering and ship-building workers were in nearly all cases conducted under the influence of the shop stewards' movement, and in defiance of the official Trade Union leadership. At first, as we have seen, the issues were mainly industrial—wages, dilution of labour, and overstrain due to excessive speeding-up. But from 1917 the rank-and-file opposition came to centre more and more round questions of military service and 'combing-out'; and these issues, especially after the Bolshevik Revolution, led on naturally to a demand for peace and the assumption of a more revolutionary attitude. The national leaders of the shop stewards more and more converted what had begun as a movement of economic defence into a revolutionary crusade for peace and the abolition of the capitalist system. But they never carried with them the whole of the shop stewards, who included many orthodox Trade Unionists and supporters of the war. Only when a generally felt industrial grievance came to the surface were the unofficial leaders able to place themselves at the head of a solidly united workshop movement.

As long as the war lasted, the extreme scarcity of skilled labour secured the main body of shop stewards against victimisation. In a few extreme cases, as on the Clyde in 1916, the Government ventured to take drastic measures against the leaders. But usually even this was not done, for fear of provoking widespread strikes which would interrupt the supply of munitions. As soon, however, as the war ended a very different situation arose. There was an over-supply of workers; and it became easy for employers to select for dismissal workers who took the lead

in unofficial movements. To serve as a shop steward, or at all events to be active in such a service, was to invite dismissal; and the movement was no longer strong enough to meet victimisation by walking out of the shops. The power of the shop stewards rapidly crumbled away. Most of the active leaders of the national movement passed over eventually into the Communist Party; but they were no longer at the head of a formidable rank-and-file organisation powerful enough to flout the official Trade Union leadership.

The Trade Union leaders, even when they favoured shop stewards, were always opposed to the shop stewards' movement as a challenge to orthodox Trade Union methods and authority. The Trade Union structure in the engineering and kindred trades is built up on a branch basis; and the branch usually consists, not of the employees of a particular factory, but of the workers who live in a particular district. There may be in a single town a number of branches of a single Union, and the workers in a particular factory may be scattered among all the branches. Moreover, the shop stewards' movement had often ignored differences between Unions, and set out to organise all the workers irrespective of the Union to which they belonged. Consequently, the shop stewards' movement did not fit into the official Trade Union machine. Usually its leaders were advocates of amalgamation on a basis wide enough to include all engineering and kindred workers, skilled and unskilled, in a single Industrial Union, based on workshop groupings instead of branches of the traditional type.

Nevertheless, the shop steward system had taken too deep roots to be merely ignored. Instead, the Trade Union leaders took steps to bring it back, with some changes, to its earlier status as a subordinate instrument of official Trade Unionism. The Amalgamated Engineering Union, for example, made provision for the election of shop stewards under the auspices of the District Committees in the various centres, and for a small representation of

the shop stewards so elected on the District Committees, which were, however, to continue to represent mainly the branches and not the shops. This, of course, meant that the recognised shop stewards were representatives only of a particular Union, and were precluded from acting with representatives of other Unions except with the consent of the District Committee. The shop stewards' movement, where it survived, became officialised; it lost its revolutionary character, and its inclusiveness as a class movement. And, in many factories, it did not survive at all, because it had become too dangerous to serve as a shop steward under post-war conditions. The National Shop Stewards' Council, and the local Workers' Committees which had been its constituent elements, rapidly melted away.

Even during the war, the shop stewards' movement did not spread very widely outside the engineering and kindred trades, though it was powerful in aircraft manufacture among the woodworkers as well as the engineers. Attempts were made to apply the same methods in the textile, boot and shoe, and certain other industries, but not with great success. Railwaymen and miners also created powerful unofficial movements; but the railwaymen's District Councils and Vigilance Committees were never comprehensively organised on a shop basis, and in the mines the official Trade Union machinery was based so largely on the pits that there was hardly room for an unofficial movement on the same lines as that of the shop stewards. The nearest analogy to the shop steward system grew up in the London passenger transport industry, especially among the busmen. There organisations based on the garage or depot became strongly established, and survived the war period—to show, in recent years, tendencies closely similar to those of the war-time shop stewards, and to fall foul of the official Trade Union leadership in much the same way—for example, in the London busmen's struggle of 1937.

There is, indeed, a fundamental antagonism between orthodox Trade Unionism, as it has developed in Great

Britain, and workshop organisation. Official Trade Union policy aims at centralisation—at the making of collective agreements covering the widest possible area, and laying down standard rates and conditions applicable to all establishments in a given area, or even nationally. Workshop organisation, on the other hand, tends to emphasise the grievances which are most felt in particular establishments, and to be more immediately responsive to waves of feeling among the rank and file. It also tends to foster the desire for the 'control of industry', by putting it into a form in which it is directly related to the actual working conditions in each particular establishment.

The shop stewards' movement everywhere proclaimed that it stood for 'workers' control'. Immediately it sought to control, by direct action in the workshops, such matters as the dilution of labour and the adjustment of piece-work prices and other conditions of work. But its leaders aimed at building on these forms of 'control' an assumption by the workers of the general direction of the processes of industry. The Guild Socialists rationalised this aim into a demand that the State should own industry, and the workers manage it on behalf of the community. They demanded a partnership between the Trade Unions, reorganised on a workshop basis, and a democratised State. The shop stewards' leaders included many Guild Socialists; but after the Russian Revolution they were mostly disposed to put first the need for a political revolution which would dispossess the capitalists and institute the Workers' State, and to insist that workers' control meant primarily political control by the working class as a whole, and only secondarily control over particular industrial processes by the workers actually engaged in them.

If Trade Unionism aims at the control of industry, and not merely at striking favourable wage bargains with an employing class, it ought clearly to be organised on an industrial basis, so as to include all the workers in one industry in a single Union, and on a workshop basis, so as to provide an instrument for superseding the employer

or the managing authority in each particular establishment. But these projects run counter to the aims of Trade Unionism as a protective movement working within the capitalist system. For, under Capitalism, each craft thinks primarily of protecting its own interests, against other workers, as well as against the employers; and the Trade Union movement as a whole is more concerned to secure favourable agreements ensuring standard wages and hours of labour than to secure a share—which might involve dangerous responsibilities—in the 'control' of capitalist-owned industries. The workshop idea, as soon as it is linked with the idea of 'workers' control', becomes revolutionary; and the Trade Union movement, as it exists, is a movement, not for revolution, but for striking the best possible bargain with the capitalist profit-makers. Under the very peculiar conditions of war-time production, when the State became virtually the employer of all workers in the war industries, and labour power came for the time being to command a high scarcity value, the idea of workers' control was able to capture the imagination of large bodies of Trade Unionists, without its revolutionary implications becoming plain. Under post-war conditions this was no longer true; and the main body of the workers reverted to the old attempt to make the best of the system of private profit-making by means of collective bargaining. The shop stewards' movement died out as a revolutionary force, because labour had lost its war-time scarcity value. But it can be maintained with confidence that, in any revolutionary situation, the shop stewards' movement will reappear, as it naturally reappeared in France in 1936-7, when the workers occupied the factories, and as it has appeared in the United States in the campaign of the Committee for Industrial Organisation against company unionism and the refusal of American Big Business to recognise Trade Union rights of collective bargaining. The shop stewards' movement was killed for the time in Great Britain by the post-war depression and the scaling-down of the industries which had been

expanded to meet war needs; but it will come again whenever the workers are ready to take a real step forward against the capitalist system, which treats them not as men but as mere commodities for the extraction of profit in the interests of an exploiting class.

PART III

TRADE UNIONISM AS A WHOLE

THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS

by

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General Secretary, National Union of Clerks and Administrative
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THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS was established in 1868. The meeting-place was Manchester, and 34 delegates attended, representing 118,367 members.

In contrast, the last Congress (1937) was held in Norwich. There were 623 delegates, representing 4,008,647 members.

It is interesting to note the composition of the first Congress. It was called by the Manchester & Salford Trades Council. There were seven Trades Councils, twelve Trade Unions and apparently eight persons in an individual capacity.

An extract from the circular convening the Congress will be of value:—

“The Manchester & Salford Trades Council having recently taken into their serious consideration the present aspect of Trades Unions, and the profound ignorance which prevails in the public mind with reference to their operations and principles, with the probability of an attempt being made by the Legislature during the present session of Parliament to introduce a measure which might prove detrimental to the interests of such Societies *unless some prompt and decisive action be taken by the working classes themselves*, beg most respect-

fully to intimate that it has been decided to hold in Manchester, as the main centre of industry in the provinces, a Congress of the representatives of Trades Councils, Federations of Trades, and Trade Societies in general.

“The Congress will assume the character of the annual meeting of the Social Science Association, in the transactions of which Society the artisan class is most excluded; and papers will be laid before the Congress on the various subjects which at the present time affect the Trade Societies, each paper to be followed by discussion on the points advanced, with a view to the merits and demerits of each question being thoroughly ventilated through the medium of ~~the~~ public Press.”

The year before the Congress was held a Royal Commission had been appointed to inquire into Trade Unions and other bodies.

For the encouragement of those who may start good causes it should be noted that there was considerable opposition to the step taken by the Manchester & Salford Trades Council, and, as far as one can trace, few societies of note in the Trade Union Movement of that day were represented.

The following year, at Birmingham, however, a change took place. Important Unions were represented, like the Carpenters & Joiners, and other Building Trade Unions, the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, the Yorkshire and Northumberland Miners, and the Typographical Society. In addition there were the National Education League, the National Emigration Society, and that old stalwart of Birmingham Trade Unionism, W. J. Davis, representing The Barr Street Reform Association. George J. Holyoake attended, by special invitation.

In view of subsequent developments, it is indicative that one of the subjects discussed was: ‘The best means to secure the Direct Representation of Labour in the Commons’

House of Parliament.' The workers wanted minds "not to be changed by place or time".

The Parliamentary Committee was instituted, with a central office in London, and George Howell became its first salaried Secretary.

Two years later the practice was started for the Parliamentary Committee to arrange deputations to Ministers of State. At the 1871 Congress a time-honoured custom was instituted, viz., for the delegates to be entertained by some person of local repute in the town where the Congress was held, but for many years now this has been done by the local Municipal Authority.

The Congress of 1872, at Nottingham, was of great importance. On that occasion it was held in January, primarily because the Trade Union Act of 1871 came into operation at the beginning of the year and it was essential to prepare for the expected developments of Trade Union activity. Further, it was felt essential that Parliamentary Bills should be considered and prepared for when Parliament met. The membership represented was 255,710. There was continuous activity on behalf of Trade Union liberty by means of circularising throughout the country, frequent deputations to the House of Commons, and intensive lobbying against the reactionary forces. This year, too, discovered Joseph Arch, the founder of agricultural workers' organisation.

The Parliamentary efforts were unsuccessful. The Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed by the Liberals in 1871. This was followed by vindictive sentences upon men who claimed that Trade Unionists should have the same rights as those of other of Her Majesty's subjects, but in 1874 the competent leadership of the Trade Union leaders bore fruit. The first Trade Union Parliamentary Candidates were put forward, and two of them secured notable victories—Thomas Burt, at Morpeth, and Alexander Macdonald, at Stafford.

The Congress of 1875, at Glasgow, was memorable for the fact that for the first time women were delegates.

During these years there were internal struggles as to policy, but one can take it that down to 1922 the work of the Trades Union Congress through the Parliamentary Committee was of a more or less stereotyped, but important, character.

Although Congress was born in 1868 there were other conferences called in 1864, 1866, and 1867, and in the latter year the Conference of Amalgamated Trades was formed, by the commonly described 'Junta' (William Allan, Robert Applegarth, Daniel Guile, Edwin Coulson, and George Odger—the big five among the Trade Union leaders of that day). Eventually the above five and their organisations came into the 'larger' Movement.

A new epoch in workers' history happened when ~~the~~ Congress was started in 1868. Organised Labour had begun to assert its power, and employers were alarmed and demanded its curtailment. The Courts had laid it down that Trade Unions, although not criminal, were illegal organisations, and a stern fight to maintain their existence faced them. The fight was won to a large extent by the passing of the Trade Union Acts of 1871 and 1875-6, when both Trade Unions and collective bargaining were conceded and recognised by the State. The power and influence of Congress increased with the development of the Trade Union movement.

Only with the passing of the Franchise Act of 1867 were workmen entitled to vote, but the ballot was not made secret until 1872. Although its powers were considerably restricted, the Trade Union movement today owes much to the stalwarts of past days. The working week has been reduced from 60 hours and more to 48, 47, and 44 hours per week, and, with office workers, to 39, 38 and 37 hours; rates of pay are out of all proportion; the educational system has advanced, and the franchise extended. In all these results Congress played an important part. In addition it has to its credit a variety of Acts for the improvement of industrial conditions:—Factories Acts, Mines Acts; Trade Boards and Minimum Wage

Acts; Better Housing, and the Abolition of Sweating and the Half-Time System.

In these days we are apt to ignore the indebtedness of present-day workers to men and women like the five mentioned above, George Howell, Henry Broadhurst, Thomas Burt, and in somewhat later days, John Wilson, Sam Woods, Mrs. Emma Patterson, Mary Macarthur, and that doyen of Congress Secretaries—C. W. Bowerman, who is happily with us today. It would do our young folks good if they would read and study the story of our movement.

August 4th, 1914, was the beginning of a new era for Trade Unions. The war machine quickly realised that the Trade Union movement was an important *function* in the community, and Trade Union Officials were appointed to important bodies like the Cotton Control Board, and the Wool Control Board: they were to be found upon all sorts of Committees, and a Trade Unionist was in the War Cabinet.

The status of Trade Unions was thus acknowledged, and this was consummated by the Report of the Whitley Committee, published in 1917, from which the following is an extract:—

“In the interests of the community it is vital that after the war the co-operation of all classes, established during the war, should continue, and more especially with regard to the relations between employers and employed. For securing improvement in the latter, it is essential that any proposals put forward should offer to workpeople the means of attaining improved conditions of employment, and a higher standard of comfort generally, and involve the enlistment of their active and continuous co-operation in the promotion of industry.

“To this end the establishment for each industry of an organisation, representative of employers and workpeople, to have as its object the regular consideration of matters affecting the progress and well-being of the trade, from the point of view of all those engaged in it,

so far as this is consistent with the general interest of the community, appears to us as necessary."

Possibly the greatest change affecting the future of Trade Unions arising out of the war was psychological. Ideas are the driving force of humanity: convictions are catastrophic in their effect. The Great War developed the outlook of Trade Unionists in such a way as to completely change it. Industry had been looked upon as a means of livelihood; the awakened conscience of the worker is now alive to the fact that industry is not primarily a means to live, but an instrument of service. This new orientation became the basis of the claim that all engaged in industry should have a voice in its management and control. Function and Freedom were inter-related.

Another landmark was the General Strike of 1926. It is not for me to deal with the controversies associated with it, but, as one who took an active part in the strike at its headquarters, I have no hesitation in saying that it was a far greater success as a demonstration of spiritual values than many give it credit for.

In the darkest hour of modern industrial history, from the workers' standpoint, for the first time in the story of industry in this country, twenty-one of the most responsible leaders of industry approached the Trades Union Congress with a view to discussions regarding industrial policy; and the subjects named were those which they would have refused to discuss with leaders of the Trades Union movement a few years before as being outside their province.

With these discussions a definite stage in working-class organisation was reached. The General Council was recognised as the centre of authority within the Trade Union movement. It is true that prior to 1926, say from 1920, there had been a forward movement to place increased power in the hands of the General Council, but that movement was consolidated as the outcome of the General Strike. As mentioned above, to a large extent its chief functions were to prepare for each Annual Congress

and to send deputations to Ministers; but today the General Council has duties of a comprehensive character, watching and initiating labour legislation. It promotes common action on general questions affecting the workers; it assists in Trade Union organisation; becomes responsible for legal questions generally affecting the movement; it intervenes in industrial disputes, and enters into international obligations.

One of its most important departments deals with all forms of Social Insurance, to which is attached a medical expert in industrial diseases. It carries on research work, promotes legislation, and is consulted by most Trade Unions whenever in difficulty.

A department of increasing importance is the Education Department. Trade Unions have always been interested in Education. All the early leaders of the Trade Union movement were self-educated men. Whilst fitting themselves for their task they were conscious of what they had lost by being deprived of educational facilities enjoyed by those born in more fortunate circumstances. The present educational system owes a lot to the drive put into agitation by our early pioneers. But there is a section of educational activity which will be a particular function of the Trade Union Congress. Future Trade Union leaders must be equipped in all branches of administration. The foreshadowing of fundamental changes in our social and industrial systems gave education a new meaning to Trade Unionists. It is realised that those holding executive positions must have a wide range of knowledge regarding economic and political problems, and their minds so trained as will not only enable them to come to prompt and right decisions for the immediate present, but also to take a long view.

Concurrently with this the General Council is showing that it welcomes scientific developments. It desires to harness to its work the fruit of scientific research in all departments of knowledge. Knowledge is light as well as power. Steps have therefore been taken recently to get associated with its work leaders in medical and other

forms of scientific development, so that in the discussions of its various problems it may know all the facts.

Strange as it may seem, the Trade Union movement as a whole has only within recent years taken an active interest in international labour developments. For many years the Trades Union Congress has received fraternal delegates from America and Canada, but these delegations were more of a family character. Since 1918 British Trade Union international connections have increased considerably, and the British movement is looked to to give a lead in all international labour matters.

The International Labour Organisation has had a part in this development. At its Annual Conference, labour delegates from all parts of the world have met and they ~~have~~ not only acted together in framing a common policy but by getting together are better able to understand each other's difficulties. One can easily foresee that out of these contacts a World Parliament of Labour can be evolved, and in connection with this the Trades Union Congress is likely to play an important part.

With the increasing number of Socialist Governments one can see the effect of a movement of this kind.

In conclusion, one word of warning is necessary. The Trades Union Congress has often been unjustly condemned because it has not taken certain action which its critics have demanded. Great as is the power which the Congress can exert, it must be remembered that it has only been able to assume the power which the Trade Unions have permitted it to operate. Every piece of authority exercised by the Trades Union Congress has been, and can only be, with their willing consent. In the history of the Congress the General Council has had to assume powers which were refused to it one year, and yet confirmed the next, because of circumstances which arose. The General Council is not yet the General Staff of the movement, but no doubt one day it will be, when the individual Trade Unions will be prepared to give to Congress the powers now vested in them, in the interests of all.

One thing, however, is clear. The General Council itself will have to give increasing and intensive thought to the problem of Trade Unionism (in fact, it is so doing) until the movement becomes a conscious, united, and scientifically organised movement.

In connection with this development, two other problems have to be faced. One the General Council is constantly reviewing. A Trades Council brought the Congress into being. I cannot discuss here the reason why Trades Councils no longer take part in the deliberations of Congress, but for some years the General Council has had a Trades Councils Consultative Committee, composed of equal representatives from the General Council and of the Trades Councils associated with the Congress scheme. I can see the possibility, in course of time, of Trades Councils, as the local representatives of the Congress, playing an important part in the development of Trade Union activity.

The other problem is the relationship of Trade Unions, through the Congress, to the State. Nowadays there is hardly a Committee of importance set up by the Government upon which Labour has not its representatives, and increasingly the General Council of Congress is the body to nominate such representatives. This development has its dangers as well as its possibilities. At any rate, all the time the movement is preparing itself for the right use of future developments.

For those engaged in the Trade Union movement for the past twenty years it has been a great time, notwithstanding difficulties and trials. The young people of today have a glorious future to look forward to. It is fascinating with its possibilities and to none more than to Trade Unionists. They represent the workers, the largest section of the people, and once the latter have been won over, and other progressive movements seeking the well-being of humanity, a great step will have been made towards 'the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World'.

TRADES COUNCILS

IN NEARLY EVERY considerable industrial centre, unless it is given up almost entirely to a single industry, and in many quite small places as well, there is a Trades Council—that is, a federation for industrial purposes of Trade Union branches within the area. Sometimes—in many Lancashire towns, for example—the Trades Council and the Divisional Labour Party are the same body, combining both industrial and political functions. But this fusion of activities is nowadays much less common than it used to be. ‘Trades and Labour Councils’, as they were often called, used to exist in many places in which the Trades Council and Labour Party are now separate bodies. In 1918, when the Labour Party reorganised itself so as to admit individual members throughout the country, many of the old Trades and Labour Councils either became Labour Parties, or were divided. There are now about 500 Trades Councils in Great Britain, including those which are also Labour Parties. Of these, about 380 are recognised by the Trades Union Congress General Council as the local representative agencies of Trade Unionism, and are in connection with the General Council and its Trades Councils Advisory Committee.

The Trades Councils were at one time affiliated to the Trades Union Congress, of which indeed they were the actual founders. The first Trades Union Conference was summoned by the Glasgow Trades Council in 1864, and thereafter for some time Congress met at the invitation of the Trades Councils in the leading towns, and delegates from the Trades Councils played a prominent part. But

in 1895 the Trades Councils were excluded from the Congress, on the plea that their membership duplicated that of the national Unions, but really to a large extent because they tended to stand for a more advanced policy than the Congress leaders were ready to approve. This decision has never been reversed. The Trades Councils are still without representatives at Congress, though in recent years the General Council has extended a measure of recognition to those which are prepared to accept its rulings. Since 1924 there has been a Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee, representing the Congress General Council and the Trades Councils, which are grouped in six areas for this purpose. The local representatives are chosen at an Annual Conference of Trades Councils, held under Congress auspices; but Trades Councils which disregard the anti-Communist policy of the T.U.C. are not recognised.

Most Trades Councils have very little money and very little power. They depend for support on such contributions as they can collect from the local Trade Union branches. Some Unions encourage all their branches to affiliate to Trades Councils; but many are indifferent, and not more than half the total Trade Union membership is actually affiliated. In London, for example, the Trades Council does not include any branches of the N.U.R. or the Woodworkers, and only two of the A.E.U.; and only one 'Area' of the Transport and General Workers is affiliated. Where Trade Union finances are highly centralised, the contributions to the Trades Councils are usually paid out of the central funds, whereas in other Unions the branches meet the charges out of their local funds. In either case, only small affiliation fees are possible; and these go mainly on costs of management and propaganda. Trades Councils pay no benefits and have no friendly society functions. Only the few largest can afford full-time secretaries. Usually, the Councils rely on voluntary secretaries, and often they have no offices or paid staff.

The unit for affiliation is the Trade Union branch. This usually applies even where a Union has a number of branches in the Council's area. It is quite common in such case for some branches to join while others remain outside. Even if the Union's branches are linked up in a District Committee, which is responsible for their trade activity, this District Committee is usually neither affiliated to the Trades Council nor in any organic connection with it. The national Unions would mostly be hostile to such a connection, on the ground that it might lead to Trades Council interference in Trade Union policy, over which they claim exclusive control.

This situation arises out of the centralisation of organisation and of collective bargaining. In the early days Trades Councils were largely made up of independent, small local Unions. But as these were gradually absorbed into national societies, which negotiated national agreements regulating the methods of dealing with disputes over the whole country, the Trades Councils lost most of their importance as industrial bodies.

Before the rise of national Unions, it was common for the Trades Councils to play an active part in disputes, especially in raising funds on behalf of any trade which became involved in a strike or lock-out. Indeed it was largely as agencies for organising this kind of help that Trades Councils—or Trades Committees, as they were often called up to 1860—first came into existence in the years after 1815. No existing Trades Council can trace its history back continuously as far as this; but in such cities as London, Liverpool, Bristol, and Glasgow, some sort of Trades Council seems to have existed almost continuously since the 1820's. A new era, however, began with the re-formation of the London Trades Council in 1860; and this body, widely imitated in the provinces and in Scotland, served until the creation of the Trades Union Congress as a central clearing house for trade appeals for help in disputes and for the general representation of Trade Union interests.

The establishment of the Trades Union Congress with its Parliamentary Committee (now the General Council) and the growth of national Unions and methods of collective bargaining left the Trades Councils with a residue of functions, of which the most important were the conducting of campaigns for the extension of Trade Union membership, and the bringing of pressure to bear on municipal authorities, public contractors, and employers generally to secure the observance of fair wages and conditions. Up to 1918 they also concerned themselves largely with municipal, and sometimes national, politics, and acted, as we have seen, in many areas as Local Labour Parties. When these functions were withdrawn from them, in most districts, there was a tendency for a time for the Trades Councils in the smaller centres to die out; but this phase did not last long, and it became a common practice for the Trades Council, confining its own activities to propaganda, organising and discussion, to affiliate to the Divisional Labour Party, and thus indirectly retain its contact with the political side of the movement.)

The hour of glory for the Trades Councils came in the General Strike of 1926, when, either directly or through Councils of Action which they took the initiative in creating on a broader basis, they assumed the task of local organisation and responsibility for the conduct of the strike. A great many of them, during this period, issued local newspapers or bulletins to replace the regular newspapers, in addition to undertaking the local distribution of the *British Worker*. They issued permits for goods to be delivered to hospitals and for other necessary services; they improvised special transport services and conducted intensive propagandist campaigns in the neighbouring villages. On the whole this work, improvised in a few days without any sort of preparation, was done with remarkable skill and efficiency, and showed large reserves of strength and competence in the local leadership of the Trade Union movement. But with the collapse of the strike by the

surrender of the national leaders, the organisation melted away, and the Trades Councils returned to the humdrum functions of every day life.

Throughout the post-war period the persistence of unemployment has thrown new duties upon the Councils. It would have been natural if the Trade Union movement had entrusted the Trades Councils with the task of organising and locally representing the unemployed, and had helped them with funds for the financing of this service. But in practice this did not happen, and for many years no real attempt was made by the Trade Union movement as a whole to organise unemployed workers. When the task was taken in hand unofficially, by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, the belief that this body was under Communist influence caused the Trade Unions to withhold real collaboration, though for a time the Trades Union Congress recognised the N.U.W.M. and maintained a joint committee with it. Many Trades Councils collaborated with the N.U.W.M.; but as the Trades Union Congress adopted a more decisively anti-Communist policy, such collaboration was discouraged, and the Congress set to work at last to create local unemployed associations of its own through the agency of such Trades Councils as were prepared to follow its lead. The consequence was a division of forces, the unemployed being organised in some areas in bodies attached to the Trades Councils under the Congress scheme, and in others in the N.U.W.M., either in co-operation with the local Trades Council or in rivalry with it. Yet other Trades Councils, unwilling to break with the Congress, adopted a policy of neutrality, and remained on friendly terms with the N.U.W.M. without positively collaborating with it.

Whether the Trades Councils undertook the organisation of the unemployed or not, it became everywhere one of their duties to press their claims for better treatment upon the local authorities. Trades Councils took an active part in deputations and protests, demanding improved

relief scales, protesting against cases in which unemployed workers were taken on for public works at less than Trade Union rates, and keeping a vigilant eye on training camps and instructional centres. They also took up other matters of local policy, such as the housing needs of their areas, the rents charged for Council houses, the enforcement of rent control, the improvement of local amenities, and such matters of educational policy as the building of new schools and the provision of maintenance allowances.

The regular meetings of the Trades Councils, bringing together delegates from a large number of different trades, constitute in effect local Trade Union parliaments of great value in fostering the spirit of Trade Union solidarity. When new groups become organised, the Trades Councils are able to give them valuable help in learning how to carry on effective Trade Union activity; and, if more adequate resources were available, the Trades Councils could play a much larger part in the organising of new and developing trades in which Trade Unionism is weak or non-existent. In practice, however, shortage of funds usually prevents any sustained efforts of this type, except in some of the largest centres. Trades Councils are called upon to give effective help when the Trades Union Congress decides to carry out a special organising campaign; but in the main the task of organisation is left to the separate Unions, with such intermittent aid as the Trades Councils are able to give on voluntary lines.

Until 1924 the Ministry of Labour collected and published statistics showing the number of Trades Councils in existence and their affiliated Trade Union membership. But thereafter these figures were no longer issued, and no corresponding figures have been published by the Trades Union Congress. According to the official figures the number of Trades Councils in Great Britain in 1910 was 264, representing just over one million members. By 1914 the number of Trades Councils had risen to 371, and affiliated membership to nearly 1,600,000. This growth illustrates the effect of industrial unrest and Trade Union

activity in stimulating the desire for closer local unity between members of different trades.

By 1918 the number of Trades Councils had increased to 522, and they represented a membership of over 2½ millions. Peculiar conditions largely accounted for this further rapid growth. During the war the Government was compelled to invite Trade Union collaboration in many matters of control and administration, local as well as national, and it became indispensable to have in every considerable administrative area a body which could be asked to appoint local representatives on behalf of the Trade Union movement. Many Trades Councils were set up in order to nominate persons to serve on War Pensions Committees and other local bodies; and by 1918 there were Trades Councils almost everywhere.

In 1919 and 1920 there was some further increase in the number of Councils, which rose to 560 in 1920, membership advancing to 3,200,000. But thereafter, in the post-war slump, there came a decline; and by 1924 the number of Trades Councils had fallen to 476, and affiliated membership to about 2,200,000. All these figures include 'Industrial Sections' of Local Labour Parties, as well as Trades Councils which existed as independent bodies.

After the temporary boom in Trade Union activity in 1925-6, it can be regarded as certain that both the number of Councils and their membership further declined, and that this decline was accentuated in the great slump of 1931-3. Thereafter there was some revival; but no accurate estimate can be given either of the number of Trades Councils or of their membership in 1938.

In certain areas, notably in the North of England, there have existed over a long period Federations of Trades Councils, e.g. the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation, the Yorkshire Federation, and so on. These bodies have made some attempt to co-ordinate local policy and to conduct organising campaigns in the weaker parts of their areas. But if Trades Councils are usually short of funds,

Federations of Trades Councils, which depend upon them for money, are apt to be shorter still; and in practice it has been difficult for the Federations to attempt much more than periodical conferences of delegates from the affiliated Councils. Moreover, this financial difficulty has prevented Federations of Trades Councils from being established, or from surviving, except in densely populated industrial areas; and the one attempt made (before the war) to set up a National Federation of Trades Councils broke down because the local bodies could not afford to send delegates.

This experience is in marked contrast to the experience of French Trade Unionism in its Syndicalist period from the eighteen-nineties to about 1910. Whereas the British Trades Union Congress came, soon after its foundation, to be based mainly on national Trade Unions, in France the *Confédération Générale du Travail* continued for a long time to be based fully as much on the local *Bourses du Travail* (roughly equivalent to Trades Councils, but acting as Trade Union employment exchanges in the absence of a State system) as on the national Unions. This was largely because French Trade Unionism remained much less centralised than the British movement, the funds being largely in the hands of the local *syndicats*, and not centralised in the national federations. In addition the *Bourses du Travail* often received municipal subsidies in aid of their work as employment exchanges.

But as local militancy caused many of these subsidies to be withdrawn, increasing difficulty was found in maintaining the *Bourses du Travail* as the basis of the *C.G.T.*; and they were grouped into *Unions Départementales*. These *Unions* still retain an official place in the French movement, and are represented together with the national Unions in its government. The Trades Council is given a much more important position in French Trade Unionism—and indeed in most Trade Union movements abroad—than in Great Britain. In Federal States, such as the United States and Australia, State Councils or Federations of

Trade Unions occupy an important position in the movement, with some degree of autonomy in relation to the national organisation.

We have seen that the exclusion of the Trades Councils from the Trades Union Congress in 1895 was based on the allegation that they represented in the main a duplication of membership. But this argument, largely true though it was, concealed the real issue. The Trades Councils were in fact shut out partly in order to exclude 'agitators' whom the Trade Union leaders regarded as irresponsible busybodies, and partly in pursuance of a definite policy of centralising industrial control in the hands of the national Trade Union executives. The leaders wanted to make the Trades Union Congress a grand council of the national representatives of the big Unions, which were trying to build up in each trade or industry a national system of collective bargaining. They wanted the delegates at Congress to represent their own responsible point of view, and they seized their chance of excluding the 'wild men' of the Trades Councils as a sequel to the rule, passed three years before, which had shut out all delegates who were not of the working class.

Doubtless, the elimination of the Trades Councils fitted in well with the growing movement towards Trade Union centralisation. But it also made the Congress less truly representative of rank-and-file opinion, and seriously undermined the prestige of the Trades Councils as the local organs of the movement. Obviously a Congress in which two or three million votes might have been cast by the delegates of local bodies would have been a great deal more difficult for the platform to manage than a Congress in which a very small number of national Trade Unions could cast, under the system of block voting, a majority of the total votes. The Trades Union Congress might have been a very different body if the Trades Councils had retained their original place in it. That, of course, is precisely why they were not allowed to retain it.

Nevertheless, the Trades Councils remain a much more important element in the working-class movement than their recognised status suggests. They are of comparatively little significance when everything is proceeding smoothly; their time comes in periods of acute crisis, when the entire movement has to be got into action and its work co-ordinated locally as well as nationally. Trades Councils were invaluable in the movement against intervention in the Russo-Polish war of 1920. Without their organising work the General Strike of 1926 could hardly have been carried on at all. They are indispensable in any national movement which involves the active participation of the rank and file—in agitations on behalf of the unemployed, in campaigns on behalf of Spain or China, in organising drives for membership. But the national Trade Unions, though eager to secure their help when an actual emergency exists, are reluctant to recognise their importance in normal times, or to aid them in getting adequate resources to keep an effective organisation continuously in being. At present, this reluctance is made the greater by the fear of Communist penetration into the Unions—which largely dominates official Trade Union policy. Not that most Trades Councils are Communist, or under Communist influence: far from it. But it is naturally easier for left-wing elements to find expression through local bodies than through the national machinery of the Trade Unions.

In 1937 the Trade Unions affiliated to the Labour Party agreed to give the Local Labour Parties a better representation on the Executive of the Party and a larger voice in its counsels. It remains to be seen whether this recognition of the need for allowing a fuller expression of local sentiment on political matters will have any echo on the industrial side of the movement. Probably it will not, yet awhile, for there is no one at the Trades Union Congress to push the Trades Councils' claims. Nevertheless the Councils have a case for fuller recognition, especially if the Trade Union movement means to win its way to influence in the unorganised industries. For, in attempting

this, local bodies transcending the limitations of a particular Union and appealing on a broader basis to workers of every grade could, with adequate financial resources behind them, work far more effectively than the Unions can separately, and could therewith help to build up from below a more solid and united movement.

TRADE UNION FINANCE

by

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IN DAYS GONE by there were two (or more) vocabularies suitable for those who discussed the problems of Trade Unionism. One was the vocabulary of vituperation—Trade Union leaders were agitators, irreconcilables, demagogues, men who (as a newspaper put it in 1913) “would get up a strike in paradise”; strikes were criminal conspiracies, outbursts of disaffection, attacks upon society, and so on. The other was the vocabulary of explanation—Trade Unions were the fraternal agencies of collective bargaining and of mutual self-help, strikes the regrettable breakdown of co-operative efforts to remedy grievances. Which of these vocabularies can be regarded as the more appropriate is by no means a matter of taste. The historical examination of Trade Union finance seems to show that aggression has certainly not been a normal feature of Trade Union policy, that Trade Unions, if not entirely composed of angels, are reasonable bodies, even conservative in the main in their outlook.

Trade Union finance, it might almost be said, had no public history till 1871. Parliaments and law courts belonged to employers; and until they had reached the state of tolerating or accepting Trade Unionism, continuity of policy and financial stability alike were somewhat fortuitous. The danger from within, too, was considerable—the danger of pressing demands inopportunately, rather

than that of an unwise use of the collective resources. The function of leadership, then, was too often a series of exercises in the tricky art of restraining localities from the ill-timed strike. The result was the growth of institutional caution which is a marked feature of British Trade Unionism. This caution was the greater because of the absence, at any rate prior to the franchise extension of 1867, of other than industrial outlets for the widening sense of political and social responsibility of skilled workers. The cumulative pressure of a long period was rewarded by the Act of 1871, which gave Trade Unions a quasi-corporate status. In Acts of 1868 and 1869 the tenacious capitalist oyster had been slightly prised open—Unions had acquired protection thereby against the embezzlement or theft of their funds. But such protection was precarious because it would not have been available to any Union declared by the Courts to be a criminal conspiracy. Such declarations, it may be added, would have been in the direct line of precedent. Hence the emancipating Act of 1871 began the current phase of Trade Union history. That phase has been one of stability. The language of vituperation has grown increasingly irrelevant and obsolete, though it has its exponents of the Left as well as of the Right. Since 1871 Trade Union finance, like Trade Union functions which it faithfully mirrors, has come into the open. The modification of the Act of 1871 by the Trade Disputes Act of 1927, so far as finance is concerned, affected only the political funds—directly, at any rate. It may be that the Act of 1927 affected Trade Union policy and therefore expenditure. The desire, and the necessity, of the Unions was to build up depleted resources, and for that end adventure had to be avoided. But that modification apart, the Act of 1871 still stands. Under its provisions registered Trade Unions have made annual returns of their income and expenditure and had their accounts audited. These returns are made available annually by the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies.

The income of the Trade Unions is derived from the contributions of their members and from the returns on

such investments of annual surpluses as may be made. Contributions are supplemented, from time to time, by special levies and some Unions exact entrance fees from new-comers. The main source of funds is, and has always been, the weekly contribution: the levy has been used for special purposes, such as superannuation funds, and (before 1927) for political needs, as well as for the supplementing of ordinary income: the entrance fee is a quite small payment nowadays, covering little more than the rule-book and membership card, though in earlier times it was far from nominal and included an extra sum as 'an excuse for a glass'. There is a further source of income which arises from the work done by Trade Unions in connection with the national scheme of unemployment insurance. This represents the repayment of moneys disbursed by the Unions and recovered from the Ministry of Labour plus a payment for administration expenses ($4\frac{1}{2}d.$ in the £ on the benefit paid).

The average contribution per member for all purposes has tended upwards in recent years. In 1926, for obvious reasons when the circumstances of the 'general stoppage' are recalled, it reached its lowest point at £1 12s. 8d. In 1927 it was £1 16s. 6d., and it had climbed to £1 19s. 2d. in 1934 and fallen slightly to £1 18s. 5d. in 1935. These average figures are compounded from wide variants. The average total contribution per member for all purposes in 1935 was only 8s. 10d. in the Chemicals group, and 13s. 3d. in Agriculture, but it was £2 16s. 5d. in Metals, almost the same in Building, and as high as £5 18s. 7d. in Printing. These wide variations are determined by the range of benefits made available to members by the Unions. A weekly contribution of 6d. is paid by members of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, and of 4d. by the agricultural labourers, but compositors pay 4s. 6d. a week or more, according to the grade of work, and an extra 3d. an hour for overtime. The compositors have to finance a considerable superannuation fund, but the agricultural and municipal labourers provide only

trade benefits. Many Unions support benefit schemes participation in which is optional.

An essential part of Trade Union finance is the accumulation of funds. For two years in succession there has been an increase of the total funds of the Trade Unions as a whole of over £1,000,000, and at the end of 1935 they had attained the figure of £14,167,202. In both years the relatively low costs of unemployment, dispute and sick benefits had made this considerable accumulation possible. Naturally big increases in funds are made by, and possible to, only the larger Unions. In 1935 the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the National Union of Railwaymen, and the Transport and General Workers' Union (although it incurred an expenditure of £24,000 more in dispute pay than in the preceding year) each increased their funds by over £100,000.

To estimate the position of Trade Union funds it is necessary to relate the totals to membership. The funds per member in 1935 were £3 14s. 8d., an increase of 1s. 3d. over the previous year. Again, there are wide variations between different labour groups, and there are variations from year to year in accordance with expenditure. The very small Chemicals Group of under 6,000 members had 2s. 2d. per head in 1935 as against 3s. 6d. in the previous year; at the other end of the scale the slightly smaller Fishing Group had £11 8s. 6d. in 1935 as against £11 15s. 3d. in 1934; the Printing Group of over 120,000 members had £9 19s. 1d. in 1935 and £8 15s. 1d. in 1934; the Transport and General Labour Group of over one and a quarter millions had £3 12s. 8d. in 1935 and £3 13s. 5d. in 1934. These Groups are in accordance with the industrial classification of the 1931 census. The biggest accumulations of individual Trade Unions are those of the A.E.U., with 228,359 members and £1,856,134 at the end of 1935; the N.U.R., with 305,972 members and £1,852,507; Transport and General Workers with 493,266 members and £730,823; the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, with 300,144 members and £636,487.

There were altogether nineteen Unions with accumulated funds in 1935 of over £100,000.

The funds of registered Unions have shown great steadiness in recent years. It has been a period of industrial peace and only the 'national stoppage' of 1926 provides a break of any magnitude. The accumulated funds stood at £11,434,414 in 1924; at £12,556,434 in 1925; but they dropped to £8,478,371 in 1926. They rose to £9,709,538 in 1927 and to £10,602,403 in 1928. The bad years of 1931 and 1932 showed a falling off, and the figures dropped below those of 1930. In 1933 the improvement was sufficiently marked for the 1930 total to be passed, and this improvement has been fully maintained. A substantial fraction of the annual income of the Unions is derived from the investment of these accumulated funds.

Since the Act of 1927 the Trade Unions have had to keep separate reckonings of their political funds. There were 2,078,000 members of registered and unregistered Trade Unions who 'contracted in' to the political funds in 1935. That number has remained pretty stable in recent years. So have the contributions, which have varied between £170,000 in 1928 and £144,000 in 1931. In 1935 the total was £163,000. There has been a similar variation in expenditure, but a diminution is inevitable after a general election. The total funds available for expenditure at the end of 1935 was £378,000, but in 1934 it had been as high as £432,000.

The income of registered Trade Unions in Great Britain, exclusive of State unemployment funds and administration allowances in connection therewith, is summarised in the following table:—

<i>Year</i>	<i>Unions on Register at end of year</i>	<i>Number of Members</i>	<i>Income</i>	
			<i>from members</i>	<i>from other sources</i>
				£'s
1931	552	3,631,220	6,929,273	636,992
1932	549	3,458,772	6,684,173	690,395
1933	547	3,400,471	6,535,979	625,008
1934	537	3,565,820	6,852,150	646,537
1935	537	3,850,755	7,153,155	608,574

In the above table income from members includes levies as well as contributions, and 'from other sources' the income from investments, funds transferred from other Unions on amalgamation, and such incidentals as contributions or levies from other Unions.

The expenditure of Trade Unions gives a clear picture of their functions. There are three broad categories of expenditure—benefits, which are of two kinds, and management. The policy of the Trade Unions in the payment of benefits to their members has been variously attacked and defended. It has often been explained that the older Unions adopted a policy of paying benefits—other than the 'trade benefits' to meet living expenses during trade disputes and spells of unemployment—in order to win and retain members and strengthen them against the insecurities of industrialism. In older days, before the public social services had been established, only personal savings, charities and self-help provision of this kind stood between the workers and the Poor Law. In more recent years, Trade Union provision in this field has been only a part, but by no means an unimportant part, of the available provision against the disabilities of industrialism. It is sometimes suggested that this feature of Trade Unionism is now obsolete and that more aggressive policies could be developed if the social benefits were eliminated. It is very doubtful whether any considerable body of Trade Union opinion would support this view, though it well may be a less conspicuous part of Trade Union function in years to come.

Unions vary considerably in their social benefits. The average expenditure per member in the Printing Group was 50s. 10d. in 1935; in Metals it was 25s. 3d., and in Building 23s. 1d.; in Agriculture it was 1s. 3d., and in Chemicals 3d. On the other hand, some Unions maintain no social benefits. When the 'new unionism' was established in 1889 among unskilled and hitherto unorganised workers, the repudiation of social benefits and an aggressive industrial policy were its main features.

Trade benefits are the second category of benefit expenditure. These comprise dispute pay, including allowances when in search of employment, assistance (in a few Unions) to members emigrating, and payments due to lock-outs or unemployment consequential upon disturbances in other trades. Unemployment benefits in the table below include State benefit, paid out by the Unions but recovered from the Ministry of Labour, and the additional voluntary benefit of the Unions. In 1935, £703,000 was the expenditure on voluntary benefit, which was £139,000 less than in 1934 and £395,000 less than in 1933. The 'other benefits' in the last column include benevolent grants, lump sums on retirement, legal expenses in defending members, and various miscellaneous benefits and expenses.¹

Expenditure of Registered Trade Unions in Great Britain on various benefits
(in £'s)

	Unemployment Benefit	Dispute Benefit	Sick and Accident Benefit	Funeral Benefit	Superannuation Benefit	Other Benefits
1930	5,350,362	318,729	706,806	338,481	986,152	258,098
1931	8,339,981	169,115	697,771	349,754	1,042,753	278,826
1932	6,941,468	257,201	640,892	339,475	1,073,455	289,685
1933	5,016,760	190,047	628,975	353,729	1,062,029	315,015
1934	3,632,641	104,498	563,462	343,139	1,056,396	321,997
1935	2,504,391 ¹	231,941	581,510	350,524	1,071,689	336,807

¹ Of this, £1,801,000 was State benefit, and £703,000 Trade Union benefit proper.

The variable in these expenditures, as would be expected, has been the first two columns. The others are reasonably stable. The charge often made that Trade Union benefits are not actuarially sound is true but irrelevant. Special levies to meet exceptional circumstances, variations or suspensions of social (or 'friendly', as the old term was) benefits have been unavoidable. The cost of the 'general stoppage' worked out at 26s. 2d. per member, but the dispute benefit cost as little as 7d. per member in 1934, while it rose to 1s. 3d. in 1935. Over the three years 1919-21, the aggregate sum spent in dispute benefit averaged nearly £3,000,000 per annum, as against £175,000 per annum in 1933-5.

Trade Unions have often been criticised, and ignorantly, for the scale of their management expenses. The now defunct *Morning Post*, for example, made a considerable song-and-dance on this subject in 1921. The average expenditure per member on working expenses was as low in 1925 as 14s. 1d., and as high in 1932 as 15s. 2d. But these are the extreme variations in recent years, and the Chief Registrar himself, in his Report for 1920, explained that, in addition to the ordinary expenses of management, Unions incurred expenditure on organisation and propaganda, delegates' expenses and expenses in connection with Arbitration and Conciliation Boards or Industrial Councils. Hence working expenses, he showed, could not but be high, and he showed that the principal items of the larger Unions' expenditure on management were salaries and wages (41 per cent), rent, rates and taxes (5 per cent), stationery, printing and postage (17 per cent) and delegates' fees and expenses (16 per cent). The totals may seem large, but they are not sudden or extravagant. In 1934 working expenditure under this head, including administrative costs recoverable from the Ministry of Labour in connexion with the Unemployment Insurance, was £2,548,000, and in 1935 it was £2,633,000.

There is one other aspect of Trade Union finance which calls for description. As the democratic state has at long last and slowly begun to take shape, it has adopted and generalised some parts of the activities of voluntary bodies. Among these the friendly benefits of Trade Unions have been conspicuous. The days are gone now when the workers of various grades are left solely to their own resources and to the mutual aid organised by their own bodies for the mitigation of the effects of economic insecurity inseparable from capitalism. As the nineteenth century drew to a close Parliament began to discuss, and in the twentieth century the State accepted, public responsibility in respect of the health and unemployment of the working classes.

The National Unemployment Insurance Scheme was

inaugurated in 1911, following upon the examination of unemployment by the Royal Commission of 1905-9. The Royal Commission had fought shy of a general scheme of unemployment insurance and preferred the encouragement of voluntary insurance by subsidising voluntary schemes. It was possible, however, to experiment with selected trades, covering over two million workers, after the establishment in 1909 of public Employment Exchanges. In 1911, accordingly, compulsory State insurance against unemployment was introduced "primarily as a means of extending something like the Trade Union system to unskilled and unorganised workmen".¹ In the post-war circumstances of widespread unemployment, and before the 1911 scheme had had a full or adequate trial, this system of public provision had to be rebuilt. This was done in the Act of 1920 and its many subsequent statutory and administrative modifications.

It was both fitting and socially valid that the Trade Unions' knowledge and administrative experience of unemployment should be utilised in this new public service. Accordingly they were geared into the scheme. The Minister of Labour was authorised to make arrangements with societies administering unemployment benefits, whereby such societies should pay their members the approved sums and recover from the Ministry the aggregate of these payments. An allowance for expenses of administration was a necessary corollary to this arrangement. The volume of the benefit-payments administered by Trade Unions has varied with the pressure of unemployment and the variations of public policy. At their highest they reached £5,449,210 for Great Britain, as compared with £74,719,765 directly paid by the State, in 1931-2; in 1935-6 the respective figures were £1,758,719, as compared with £40,956,556. Variations in the proportions directly and indirectly administered reflect no more than the changing volume of unemployment and

¹ Evidence of Sir William Beveridge before the Royal Commission on Unemployed Insurance.

Trade Union membership in different industries. The contributions received from the Ministry of Labour for administrative expenses are assessed at the rate of $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ in the £ of unemployment payments. In 1936 they amounted to £33,000.

While the participation of voluntary bodies in the State scheme of Unemployment Insurance is limited to Trade Unions, there are many types of societies engaged in the administration of National Health Insurance. Health insurance is supposed to be administered by the consumer—though when Bismarck initiated the first public sickness insurance scheme he intended to rob the German labour movement of its thunder, and when the first Chamberlain pushed against the prejudices of the orthodox in this country, his vision of a more dynamic future included imperialism and protection along with pensions and social services in a new political trinity. Consumer administration by societies supposed to be managed by their members has had advantages, but the approved societies include Friendly Societies, Industrial Insurance Companies, and Employers' Provident Funds as well as Trade Unions. It has been an unfortunate experience that in England alone, out of 2,208 societies which had been granted approval, no fewer than 1,192 had ceased to administer the Act by 1925. At the present time there are 788 approved societies, including 25 branch societies, with 5,490 branches, at work in England and Wales. Quinquennial valuations and detailed investigation by the Ministry of Health combine to exert a pressure upon the societies under which efficiency of administration has been improved and their multiplicity reduced. There is great dispersion of membership, with consequent high administration costs, and there are small societies, with consequent disparities of additional benefits. To yoke Trade Unions with Industrial Insurance Companies in the administration of a public social service was unfortunate. The latter have a nasty past, but their ubiquitous agents, with their house-to-house system, are convenient. Hence some

25 per cent of the insured belong to the approved societies set up by these bodies—nearly three times the number in Trade Union approved societies. There is no substance behind the façade of democratic control of the Industrial Assurance Companies, and their service is less likely than that of the Trade Union to have the quality of sympathetic understanding. It must be, in itself, a non-profit service, but it cannot in practice be dissociated from the profit-making business of the parent bodies. The Trade Union approved societies escape any such doubtful influence; and they have a record of effective service in the advancement of workers' claims, which, being based on a real understanding of their position, is not equalled by any other kind of body.

TRADE UNIONS IN POLITICS

IN 1909 THE House of Lords decided, in the famous Osborne Judgment, that a Trade Union, or at all events a Union registered as such under the Trade Union Acts, had no power to take political action, or to spend any of its funds on political objects. The grounds for this decision, which reversed a practice of long standing in many Unions and threatened the entire basis on which the Labour Party was being built up, were by no means clear. Different judges expressed different views. It was argued that it was contrary to public policy that bodies recognised by the State for primarily economic objects should be allowed to assist in the return to the House of Commons of members pledged to follow a definite political policy; and it was also argued that Trade Unions, as associations granted certain privileges by the State for particular purposes, should not be allowed to stray outside the methods of action explicitly specified in the statutes granting them these privileges. Thus on the one hand the Osborne Judgment appeared to rest on a conception of expediency, or public policy; and on the other hand it seemed to be based on a strict interpretation of the legal notion of *ultra vires*, and on regarding the Trade Union as a body corporate created by Statute, and accordingly incapable of any action which Parliament had not positively recognised as appropriate to it.

Whatever were the grounds on which the Osborne Judgment reposed, the effect was the same. Trade Unions, which had been financing candidates for Parliament ever since the Reform Act of 1867 and for local governing

authorities for almost as long, suddenly found this part of their activities pronounced illegal by the courts, and were at the mercy of any member who chose to bring an action designed to prevent them from expending money on political purposes. The Labour Party, having won for itself in the General Election of 1906 a foothold in politics, found itself threatened with the loss of the Trade Union support which alone had made this success possible. It seemed as if the Law Lords had deliberately set out to destroy the new party, and to break the political influence of the Trade Unions, just as in the Taff Vale Judgment of a few years before they had attempted to destroy the movement's power of industrial action.

In 1913 the Trade Union Act restored to the Unions a modified right to take political action. As against the *ultra vires* notion, which had been invoked in the Osborne case, this Act declared that a Trade Union was free to engage in any lawful activity authorised by its rules, in the same way as any other voluntary body, and was not limited to the specific Trade Union objects mentioned in the Trade Union Acts of 1871 and 1876. But whereas any other lawful object could be pursued at the discretion of the Union, without interference from the State, the pursuance of political objects by the Trade Unions was made subject to special restrictions. It was laid down that any Union, before taking political action of any sort, must take a ballot vote of its members in order to secure the necessary authority. It must then adopt a series of Model Rules approved by a public official—the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies; it must constitute a separate political fund, out of which alone money could be disbursed for political purposes; and it must allow any member who objected to paying the 'political levy' to avoid this payment by signing a form expressing his unwillingness to pay, without thereby suffering any disability as a member of the Union. This process was known as 'contracting-out'.

The Act of 1913 by no means satisfied the Trade Union representatives, who claimed that a Trade Union, in

taking political action, ought to be on exactly the same footing as any other voluntary body. But the Unions adapted themselves to the new legal position. Most of the large Unions took political ballots and secured the requisite votes in favour of political action: they adopted model rules, and maintained their affiliation to the Labour Party. In most Unions relatively few members signed forms 'contracting-out' of the political levy, though, when the levy was collected apart from the ordinary Trade Union contribution, it was not always paid, even by members who had not gone to the trouble of signing a form. Some Unions, notably in the building trades and among non-manual workers, remained outside the Labour Party; and a few unregistered Unions continued to spend money on politics without taking a ballot, on the ground (doubtful in law) that the Osborne Judgment applied only to registered Unions, or that they were not Trade Unions within the meaning of the Act.

So the law remained until 1927. But in that year the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, passed by the Conservatives as a reprisal after the General Strike, again altered the position. In addition to prohibiting Trade Unions of Civil Servants from taking political action, the Act of 1927 abolished 'contracting-out', and substituted for it a procedure of 'contracting-in'. After its passage, no member could lawfully be called upon to pay the political levy, which had to be kept entirely separate from other Trade Union funds, unless he had actually signed a form expressing his desire to contribute to the Union's political fund. It was hoped by the Conservatives that this measure would cripple the Labour Party's finances; and the affiliated Trade Union membership of the Labour Party did actually fall from 3,888,000 in 1926 to 2,077,000 in 1928, and to less than 2,000,000 in the years of slump after 1931. But this fall, which was partly due to a decline in total Trade Union membership, was much smaller than the Conservatives had hoped. In most Unions, the officials were reasonably successful in getting members to sign on

for the political levy. The Labour Party was hampered, but by no means destroyed. In 1926 its affiliated membership was about one million below that of the Trades Union Congress: in the 1930's the gap widened to roughly a million and a half. But this loss was largely offset by the growth of individual membership in the Local Labour Parties, from 215,000 in 1928 to nearly half a million in 1937.

Before the creation in 1900 of the Labour Representation Committee—which became the Labour Party in 1906—there had been various attempts to organise the Trade Unions for combined political action. In the middle of the nineteenth century it was common for Trade Unions and Trade Union branches to forbid political discussions in their meetings, for fear of provoking dissensions among their members. Despite the efforts of Feargus O'Connor and Ernest Jones, few Trade Unions were ready to identify themselves with the Chartist movement, though a number of Trade Unionists were active in it, and William Newton, of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, stood in 1852 as a Chartist candidate for the famous Radical constituency of Tower Hamlets. At a time when very few workmen possessed the franchise, such a candidate stood little or no chance of success, even in an advanced Radical area.

The indispensable first step towards working-class parliamentary action was to win the vote for at any rate a considerable section of the working class. This was done in 1867, as far as the boroughs were concerned, though not in the county constituencies, where the working classes were not enfranchised until 1884. In the agitation which led up to the Act of 1867 the Trade Unions played a prominent part. The Trade Union Manhood Suffrage and Vote by Ballot Association, founded in 1862 by the London Trade Union leaders, had a large share in starting the campaign; and when this body developed two years later into the National Reform League, the Trade Unions continued to dominate it. This, however, was mainly in the South and Midlands. The National Reform Union,

which was chiefly responsible for conducting the campaign in the North, did not rely on the support of the Trade Unions as such, though many Trade Unionists took an active part in its work.

When a large section of the urban workers had gained the vote in 1867, the work of the National Reform League seemed to be done, and it was dissolved. But two years later, in 1869, the Trade Union leaders created the Labour Representation League, for the purpose of putting up working men as candidates for Parliament. The founders of the L.R.L. did not contemplate the creation of a separate working-class political party: their aim was simply to secure the election of actual working men, preferably with Liberal support. There were at this time other groups—notably in the London Working Men's Association, headed by George Potter, the London builders' leader, and Robert Hartwell, and in the British section of Marx's International Working Men's Association, founded in 1864—which did favour the creation of an independent party. But these were relatively few.

In 1868, when the first General Election after the Act of 1867 was fought, the London Working Men's Association did its best to create a national movement for working-class representation, and to interest Trade Unions and Trade Councils in its scheme. But only three 'Labour' candidates went to the poll—though in all three cases there were Liberals as well as Tories in the field against them. The Liberals, in fact, were entirely unwilling to recognise that workmen, even if they had votes, had any claim to sit in Parliament. Except the three who persisted, the Labour candidates who offered themselves were either compelled to withdraw for lack of funds, or persuaded to do so in order to avoid splitting the Liberal vote. No working-class candidate came near election.

By 1874 the miners who lived in towns—those in the county areas were outside the scope of the 1867 Act—had established their right to vote, which had been at first denied them on the ground that they lived in colliery

houses; and some of the local Liberal and Radical Associations had come to a different frame of mind, and were prepared to let a few workmen fight without putting forward Liberal candidates against them. By this time the Labour Representation League was in the field, with the official blessing of most of the Trade Union leaders. In a few cases, where Liberal endorsement was refused to a working-class candidate, the L.R.L. fought a three-cornered contest; but Macdonald and Burt, the two workmen—both miners—who secured election, had Liberal support, Burt in a single-member constituency and Macdonald with a middle-class Liberal colleague against two Tories. In no three-cornered fight did the working-class candidate come anywhere near success.

From 1874 onwards the miners have never been without representatives of their own in Parliament. But the L.R.L. did not secure much backing from other Unions: nor did it aim at any stage at creating an independent working-class party. It was held that there should be at any rate some workmen in Parliament, able to speak with first-hand experience on working-class questions, and ready to act together on direct working-class issues. But beyond this the L.R.L. did not go. The candidates elected under its auspices merged themselves into the Liberal Party naturally because they were Liberals, and their hero was not Karl Marx or any working-class leader or prophet, but Mr. Gladstone.

By 1881 the L.R.L. was dead, having added only Henry Broadhurst to Burt and Macdonald at the General Election of 1880. In the early 'seventies the Trades Union Congress had passed resolutions in support of working-class representatives in Parliament, and had given some support to the L.R.L. But in the depression of the later 'seventies these decisions, though reaffirmed year after year, were treated by the Parliamentary Committee as 'hardy annuals', about which nothing needed to be done. In the early 'eighties controversy became more active. T. R. Threlfall proposed at one Congress after another that the

T.U.C. should itself establish a parliamentary fund; but the most he could get as late as 1884 was a resolution urging the workers to organise themselves (how was not specified) for the return of more workmen to Parliament. Only in 1886, the year after his presidency of Congress, did he succeed in getting his resolution carried. Congress agreed to set up a Labour Electoral Committee, to be elected annually at the Congress itself side by side with the Parliamentary Committee, but on a basis of regional representation. But in the following year the new body was separated from Congress, and became the Labour Electoral Association.

This new organisation, which lasted until 1895, worked mainly through the local Trades Councils. It refused to be responsible for any candidates who were not working men, though it readily supported middle-class Liberals, even against working men, such as Keir Hardie and Ben Tillett, of whose policy it disapproved. It was, from start to finish, definitely a 'Lib-Lab' organisation; and, so far from representing a victory for the cause of independent Labour representation, it became, with the rise of the New Unionism and of the Socialist movement, a powerful obstacle in the way.

The L.E.A. had barely been founded when the demand for *independent* Labour representation began to take shape in the constituencies themselves. Keir Hardie fought Mid Lanark as an 'independent' in 1888, in a three-cornered fight; and the Scottish Labour Party was formed in the following year. Local 'Labour Parties', under various names, began to spring up in a number of towns—Salford, Bradford, Bristol and, presently, London. Local branches of the L.E.A. began to break away, and go over to the new movement. In 1892, under the stimulus of the 'New Unionism', three 'independent' Labour candidates secured election, in addition to twelve 'Lib-Labs', supported by the L.E.A. The three newcomers were Hardie for South-West Ham, John Burns for Battersea, and Havelock Wilson for Middlesbrough; but of these only Wilson won in a three-

cornered fight. Burns had no Liberal against him; and Joseph Leicester, Hardie's 'Lib-Lab' opponent, withdrew before the poll. In the following year, 1893, the local bodies which stood for independent political action came together and formed the Independent Labour Party.

There followed seven years of struggle inside the Trade Union movement. The T.U.C. and its Parliamentary Committee continued to oppose the 'independents', and to support the 'Lib-Labs'. Hardie held that it was impossible to build a strong working-class political movement without bringing over the Trade Unions. He stood for the policy of the 'Labour Alliance'—that is, for an alliance between the Trade Unions and the convinced Socialists of the I.L.P. At length, in 1900, he got what he wanted. The Trades Union Congress agreed to set up a Labour Representation Committee on a basis of independence of other parties—though not as a party, or with any clear profession of Socialist faith. Not until 1903 did the affiliated Unions agree to impose a political levy on their members, or to adopt a disciplined party policy. Only in 1906, under the further stimulus given by the hopes of using the new Parliament as an instrument for securing the revival of the Taff Vale Judgment, did the L.R.C. change its name to the Labour Party and establish itself as definitely a national rival to the two traditional parties.

At first, the L.R.C. had only a small amount of Trade Union support. The 1901 Conference represented only 376,000 members, including the Socialist Societies, as compared with a total Trade Union membership of two millions. Even in 1906, it had only about one million, though in these days before the legal requirements of the 'political levy', Unions commonly affiliated on their full membership. By 1915, however, the Labour Party's strength was 2,093,000, as compared with 2,682,000 for the Trades Union Congress, and 4,359,000 for the whole Trade Union movement. The Miners' Federation had joined by 1910, under the double stimulus of the eight-hours fight and the Osborne Judgment. Before the war the

Labour Party had definitely established itself as the political instrument of the Trade Unions.

It has often been said that the House of Lords made the Labour Party—by the Taff Vale and Osborne Judgments. The Taff Vale case forced imperatively on the Trade Unions the need for legislative action to secure their funds from attack; and the prestige gained by the young Labour Party when it successfully compelled the Liberal Government to withdraw its own Bill and meet the Trade Union demands to the full brought in more recruits. But at this point the party had to meet the challenge of the Osborne Judgment, which struck at the very foundations of the movement, by threatening to deprive it of funds. The institution of payment of M.P.s did something to reduce the immediate pressure; but not till 1913 did a new Trade Union Act—already described—authorise political action.

Under this system, which remained in force till 1927, the Labour Party's affiliated membership (excluding individual members) rose from rather under two millions before the war to 4,360,000 at the Conference early in 1921. This compares with a peak T.U.C. membership of six and a half millions at the Congress of 1920, and a peak total Trade Union membership of 8,334,000 in the same year. Thereafter came a decline, corresponding to a general fall in Trade Union strength during the post-war slump. Labour Party affiliated membership fell to 3,156,000 at the 1924 Conference, and had only recovered to 3,388,000 at the Conference of 1927. Thereafter, the Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Act of 1927, by substituting the more stringent 'contracting-in' procedure for that of 'contracting out', brought the total down to 1,897,000 at the Conference of 1935—after which a slow recovery carried it back to 2,014,000 at the 1937 Conference. This last figure compares with a Trades Union Congress affiliated membership of four millions in 1937.

Thus, as a result of the 1927 Act, the ratio of the Labour Party to Trades Union Congress affiliated membership has substantially declined. This is not due to the enforced

secession of the Post Office and Civil Service Trade Unions, which applies to the T.U.C. as well, and has therefore affected total rather than relative strength. The main cause is the 'contracting-in' procedure made compulsory by the 1927 Act. This has worked out very differently in different Trade Unions. The percentage of 'contracted-in' members differs extraordinarily from Union to Union, partly, no doubt, in accordance with real differences of view between the members of different occupations, but also very largely according to the degree of energy expended by the leaders and officials of the various Unions in getting forms signed. The range of difference among large Unions is immense. In 1937 the Distributive and Allied Workers paid to the Labour Party on behalf of 87 per cent of the membership on which they were affiliated to the Trades Union Congress, the Weavers on 86, the Railway Clerks on 80, and the Mineworkers' Federation on 77 per cent. But at the other end of the scale the Amalgamated Engineering Union paid on only 28 per cent, the Building Trade Workers on 25 per cent, the Locomotive Engineers and Firemen on 24, and the Electrical Trades Union on 23 per cent. The Painters created an exceptionally low record by paying on less than 8 per cent of their T.U.C. membership. For the remaining very large Unions the figures were—General and Municipal Workers 71 per cent, National Union of Railwaymen 64 per cent, Transport and General Workers 57 per cent, Amalgamated Woodworkers 35 per cent. In general the craft Unions had the worst records, and the Unions with low contributions supported the Labour Party better than those with higher contributions and benefits. Nearly all large Unions, except among blackcoats, paid some contribution, the chief exceptions being the Plumbers, the Printing and Paper Workers, and the Shipwrights.

These percentages cannot be taken as more than approximations; but they probably give a better idea of the position than the calculations based on comparing 'contracted-in' membership with total membership as returned

to the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies, because the official figures include superannuated and unemployed members, and also juveniles, who are often counted as only one-half a member for T.U.C. purposes. The membership affiliated to the T.U.C. can be taken as roughly the active membership, with which the numbers 'contracting-in' can be most appropriately compared.

Another way of looking at the part played by the Trade Unions in the Labour Party is to study the composition of the party in the House of Commons. In 1937, out of 160 M.P.s attached to the Labour Party, exactly half were directly financed by Trade Unions, whereas 9 were financed by the Co-operative Party, and the remaining 71 by the Divisional Labour Parties in their constituencies. But of course a number of the D.L.P. members were also Trade Unionists, and most of them drew a part of their financial support from Trade Union contributions. It is, however, clear that the majority of the D.L.P. members were neither manual workers nor Trade Union officials, but came from the middle-class and professional supporters of the party.

If candidates are included, as well as sitting M.P.s, the direct Trade Union share in the total becomes much smaller. In 1937, out of 382 M.P.s and candidates, only 114 were Trade Union nominees, whereas 19 were financed by Co-operative bodies and 249 through Divisional Labour Parties. This is largely because the task of fighting really difficult constituencies is usually left to the D.L.P., the Trade Unions preferring to put their money into seats which they have good hope of winning. Many of the D.L.P. candidates have no full-time agent, whereas Trade Union or Co-operative responsibility for a seat usually includes the supplying of funds for a permanent organisation.

In 1937, much the largest Trade Union group in the Labour Party was supplied by the Mineworkers' Federation, with 35 sitting M.P.s, but only 3 additional adopted candidates, nearly all the seats fought in 1935 having been won. In addition, a number of miners sat as D.L.P. members,

The Transport and General Workers' Union came next, with 7 M.P.s and 4 candidates, followed by the Railway Clerks, with 7 M.P.s and 3 candidates, and the General and Municipal Workers, with 6 M.P.s and 4 candidates. The Distributive Workers had 5 M.P.s (+ 1 candidate), the N.U.R. 4 (+2), the A.E.U. 3 (+ 1), the Woodworkers 2 (+2), the Shop Assistants 1 (+2), the London Compositors 2(+0), and the Typographical Association and the Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers each 1 (+1). Six other Unions (Building Trade Workers, Pottery Workers, Patternmakers, Boilermakers, Bakers, Iron and Steel Trades) had each one member, but no other candidate in the field; and four more (Seamen, Locomotive Engineers, Printers, Boot and Shoe Operatives) one candidate each, but no sitting member. The United Textile Factory Workers' Association, representing the Cotton Unions as a group, had 6 candidates, but not one sitting M.P. Of course, all these figures exclude Trade Unionists sitting or standing under D.L.P. auspices.

Inevitably, with the decline of political membership under 'contracting-in', the Trade Union movement has become responsible for a smaller proportion of total Labour candidatures. Trade Unions have withdrawn from seats for which they used to take financial responsibility, leaving them to be fought by the D.L.P.s.

Under the Constitution of the Labour Party up to 1937, the voting power at Conferences rested with the Trade Unions, and a majority of the elected members of the National Executive were also Trade Union representatives. At Conferences the voting strength of the D.L.P.s is based only on their individual membership, not including the affiliated Trade Union and other membership; whereas the Trade Unions vote through their national delegations on behalf of all their 'contracted-in' members. Even after the rapid increase of individual membership in recent years—from 200,000 in 1927 to nearly half a million in 1938—the Trade Union vote still outnumbers the possible D.L.P. vote by 4 to 1. A large number of D.L.P.s cannot

afford to send delegates to the Conference. In 1937, out of 614 affiliated local parties, 332 were represented at the Annual Conference, with a vote of 480,000, as compared with a Trade Union vote of over two millions. In arriving at these figures, the D.L.P. vote is reduced by the absence of nearly half the parties—mostly small ones—but increased by the right of each D.L.P. to cast 1,000 votes even if its individual membership is under 1,000.

Up to 1937, the National Executive consisted of 12 Trade Union representatives, 5 from D.L.P.s, and 1 from other affiliated bodies, with 5 women chosen from the Conference as a whole. Nominations for each group had to come from a body belonging to the group, except in the case of the women; but voting was in all cases done by the whole Conference, irrespective of grouping. In 1937, under pressure from the D.L.P.s for a larger influence in the party, D.L.P. representation was raised from 5 to 7, and, except in the case of the women, each group was allowed to elect, as well as to nominate, its own candidates. Thus the Trade Unions as such have ceased to have an absolute majority, though they are certain to retain an actual majority by electing some women Trade Unionists to the women's seats. This change corresponds to the change in the balance of the party arising from 'contracting-in' on the one hand and the growth of individual membership on the other.

In effect, in the Labour Party of today, the individual members of the D.L.P.s have taken on a larger scale the place formerly occupied by the affiliated Socialist bodies—especially the I.L.P. The secession of the I.L.P. in 1932 and the expulsion and dissolution of the Socialist League in 1937 have left only the Fabian Society (1,740 members), the Social Democratic Federation (1,000), the Scottish Socialist Party (2,000), and a few miscellaneous bodies such as the University Labour Federation, in the non-Trade Union section of the party, apart from the D.L.P.s and the one affiliated Co-operative body (Woolwich Arsenal Political Committee, with 37,000 members). Keir Hardie's

notion of the 'Labour Alliance' has become a partnership not between Trade Unions and Socialist bodies, but between the Trade Unions and the D.L.P.s. It seems likely that in future the D.L.P.s will further increase their relative influence; but for some years at any rate the compromise of 1937 is likely to stand. The Trade Unions, by their overwhelming Conference vote, can in the last resort determine the Labour Party's policy; but on most issues it is unlikely that the Trade Union vote will be cast solidly on one side, and the D.L.P. vote on the other. On the Executive, which is in practice the chief policy-making body, the D.L.P. voice will be heard more effectively; and in Parliament the increase in the relative number of D.L.P. members will make the party less Trade Unionist (or at all events less 'official' Trade Unionist) in composition, and will tend to swell the ranks of the *bourgeois* Socialists. But the Trade Union basis of the party will remain for a long time yet: nor do most of those who have sought to secure increased recognition for the D.L.P.s desire to remove it. For, as was seen in the crisis of 1931, it is, at moments of fundamental conflict, a valuable guarantee of stability and an assurance against doctrinal splits actually rending the party organisation asunder.

SCOTTISH TRADE UNIONS AND THE SCOTTISH TRADES UNION CONGRESS

TRADE UNIONISM IN Scotland finds its rallying point in the Scottish Trades Union Congress, which is entirely independent of the British T.U.C. In 1937 the S.T.U.C. represented an affiliated Trade Union membership of 326,000, which had risen to about 350,000 in 1938. But of the former total no less than 300,000 came from Trade Unions, including some purely Scottish societies, which were also affiliated to the British T.U.C. In most industries the Scottish workers are organised in Unions which cover Great Britain as a whole.

These figures do not include the membership of the 40 local Trades Councils which are affiliated to the S.T.U.C.; for this body, unlike the British Congress, allows Trades Councils to send delegates to its meetings. More commonly than in England the Trades Councils in Scotland act also as Local Labour Parties, the name 'Trades and Labour Council' being still often used. In practice, only 11 out of the 40 were represented by delegates at the S.T.U.C. of 1937. The larger towns sent delegates; but many of the smaller centres did not, presumably on grounds of expense.

Separate Scottish Unions exist chiefly in the textile and building trades, and among the printers and bakers. In the building trades the masons, slaters, painters and plasterers have separate Scottish Unions, the two former (the Building and Monumental Workers' Association of Scotland, 5,100, and the Amalgamated Slaters' Society of Scotland, 1,900) being affiliated to the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, whereas the Scottish

Painters' Society (6,500) and the Scottish Operative Plasterers' Federal Union (1,500) are not. The Scottish Typographical Association (7,000) belongs to the British Printing and Kindred Trades Federation; and the Scottish Union of Bakers, Confectioners and Bakery Workers (7,700) is in the British as well as the Scottish T.U.C.

In the textile trades only the dyers and finishers, now in one Union with the English woollen and worsted operatives, are organised in a society covering England as well as Scotland. But most of the Scottish Unions are small and local, and many of them do not belong to the S.T.U.C. The largest is the Dundee and District Union of Jute and Flax Workers (8,000). Most of the societies are federated in a Scottish Council of Textile Unions, with about 26 affiliated bodies.

In addition, there are a few purely Scottish Unions in industries in which most of the workers belong to British Unions. The Scottish Dockers' Union controls the port of Glasgow, and has some thousands of members, but is not in the S.T.U.C. The Scottish Horse and Motormen's Union (8,500) organises road transport workers, and does belong to the S.T.U.C. But the Transport and General Workers' Union has 35,000 members in its Scottish area. In the metal trades there are some small purely Scottish societies, such as the Scottish Brasmoulders (500), the Scottish Brassfinishers (600), the General Iron Fitters (2,100), and the Ironfounding Workers' Association (5,000); but the great majority of the organised workers are in British Unions. The Scottish Farm Servants' Union (4,000) has recently become a section of the Transport and General Workers. The National Union of Scottish Mineworkers (30,000) belongs to the M.F.G.B., but, like other district Miners' Associations, is independent in local affairs.

It should be added that Scottish teachers are well-organised in the Educational Institute of Scotland (25,000), which differs from the English teachers' associations in including all grades. The Scottish bank clerks are also

fairly strongly combined in the Scottish Bankers' Association, which is at present putting up a good fight against the banks' refusal to recognise it, or to remedy the pressing grievances of the staffs.

The Scottish Trades Union Congress is a well-run and enterprising body. It issues a regular *Bulletin*, and has published a good many informative pamphlets. In 1925 it issued a valuable report on *The Extent and Structure of the Trade Union Movement in Scotland*—a careful survey of the entire field, comparing the strength of the Unions with the numbers employed in the various industries and occupations. This report is now out of date, and the work needs doing over again. A new survey would be of particular value in view of the special experience of Scotland during the depression, and the exceptionally heavy unemployment which has existed in Scottish industries.

TRADE UNIONISM IN SCOTLAND

by

THE RT. HON. THOMAS JOHNSTON

Author of A History of the Working Classes in Scotland.

FROM THE MIDDLE of the fifteenth century we have record of successive Statutes of the Scots Parliament empowering county Justices of the Peace to fix workmen's rates of wages; men who refused to work at the decreed rates could be imprisoned and further punished at the discretion of the Justices, and as recently as 1736 it was the law of the land, and the colliers' attention forcibly drawn to it in Dumbartonshire, that a collier's statutory wage was only £1 2s. 6d per annum. There must, of course, have been other perquisites, although of these there is now no record. It is true the Statute labour laws provided that employers should pay the rates of wages fixed by the Justices, but Parliament had thoughtlessly omitted any *compulsitor* upon an employer, and in fact and in practice the Justices' rates were only observed when they were heavily weighted against the workmen. I can find no enforcement against a recalcitrant master, and there is the historic case of the employers in the Glasgow cotton-spinning trade who defied both the Justices who had fixed the Wages Scale, and the Judges of the Court of Session who upon appeal had decreed the competency of that Scale.

Since obviously then there was no good purpose to be served by workmen appealing to the Justices, who more often than not were the employers themselves, the only recourse for the workers lay in Trade Unions and organised

strikes. But to incipient efforts in this direction for the betterment of class conditions Parliament and employers responded with the Combination Acts, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century there was strict legal prohibition of workmen's Unions for all economic ends apart from those obtainable through purely Friendly Society work. By Section IV of the Combination Act of 1800 a man might even be punished for the offence of merely attending a meeting designed for the purpose of securing a wages increase; no money could be legally collected for strike purposes.

No clauses were included in these Acts applying them specifically to Scottish legal conditions; but the judges soon applied them in practice, by deciding that combination was criminal under Scots law.

Nevertheless, even under this penal legislation furtive Unions existed here and there. There are traces of the existence of lodges of colliers in the town of Ayr in 1818, and ten years before that, in 1808, there were certainly organised groups of Scottish weavers co-operating with the weavers in Lancashire and petitioning Parliament to limit the number of apprentices in their trade and to fix a minimum wage for work.

When the Combination laws, some thirty of them all told, were got out of the way—how and why concerns me not here—Trade Unionism raised its head openly. The Ayrshire Miners' Union possesses a report of the Chairman's address at the first meeting of delegates to their County Union held at Kilmarnock on October 25th, 1824. There were 27 delegates present, and they drafted regulations for dealing with the entry of 'neutral men' into the pits. The Union was to be upon 'moderate and rational principles'. Every collier Trade Unionist had to pay 2d. entry money to the Union, but if he delayed joining up until after December 1st, 1824, he was to pay 1s. extra. All important decisions of the Union had to get a two-thirds majority of the delegates supporting them. Any Union collier who desired his son to be employed in the

pit was to be entitled to get one-fourth of a man's wages for the son's work if the son were 10 years old; if the son were 13 years old he was to be entitled to half wages, if 15 years old to three-fourths, and only at age 17 to a full man's wage. But any person coming into the trade who was not a collier's son must serve a term of three years and pay £5 sterling entry money, and he was only to be entitled to

“half a man's work at 16 years of age and three-fourths at 17, and being clear and all his money paid up may have full pay at 19 years of age”.

No ‘neutral man’ above 20 years could engage to be a collier without first paying £7 entry money and serving three years apprenticeship.

There was nothing ‘extremist’ about these Ayrshire collier Trade Unionists in 1824. Article VIII in the rules declared that if any man or group of men cannot agree “with their masters upon just and reasonable terms” and were thereby thrown out of employment, they were to be assisted by the Union until they found fresh employment, but such fresh employment it was hoped “will be as soon as can be obtained”. Fourteen days for negotiations had to elapse ere assistance was given, and no assistance was ever to exceed 7s. per week.

Article X once more emphasised that the members of the Union “are to make no unreasonable demands upon their masters”; but if the masters failed to comply with moderate and just demands, and a strike ensued, then

“All the colliers in this Association become bound not to supply this man's or men's place, but do all they can to get them employment elsewhere.”

Article XI was quaintly and cautiously worded:—

“Is it not evident that there are masters in the coal trade who are constantly running a race in the deduction of wages and are never satisfied unless they are paying below their neighbours, and by forcing the measure far
Hr

below the common standard to find a sale, and outsell their neighbour colliers? This is a case that requires immediate attention, and it becomes the duty of this Association to point out such masters; and after being duly warned, if they still continue in such a career, so hurtful to the trade in general, then it will be our duty to try every way that prudence may dictate to put them out of the trade."

Article XIV prescribed that the widow of a collier killed at his work was to receive £1, provided that she had been "regularly married", and that her husband at the time of his death had been "a clear member".

And that was Trade Unionism in Scotland little over a century ago!

What organisation of working men there was, consisted solely in a few numerically weak and localised associations, and seldom did these associations have continuous existence, for victimisation by the employers was at once easy and ruthlessly employed against any workers' spokesman or delegate. When conditions in a coal district or a factory or a group of factories became unbearable there would be a sudden concentration of employees into a Union, a sudden flare up of a strike (not infrequently accompanied by violence), and just as suddenly the Union would collapse, the agitators would be driven from the district, and years might pass ere again a combined effort of any kind was possible.

Even when the various district combinations in, say, Lanarkshire agreed to co-operate (and there is small trace even of that), they would act quite independently of their craft brethren in other parts of Scotland. Perhaps that was inevitable, since difficulties of transport and communication between, say, Forfarshire and Ayrshire were then as great as they are today between Dundee and Belfast. And the employers were equally disorganised; they seldom or never acted in co-operation. Industry was an affair of small independent units.

The early workers' Unions were inevitably driven into politics. While the workmen had no votes themselves, very frequently they could influence a number of middle-class electors, and through these electors attempts were made to get biased legislation swept from the Statute Book; supplementing these indirect efforts was a continuous stream of direct petitions to Parliament.

By the 'thirties of last century I can trace the commencement of attempts to organise upon a wider basis than a factory or a district collection of factories. In 1834 there was a West of Scotland Calico Printers Union, and a Masters' Association on a similar geographical basis to counter it. In the same year several workmen's organisations in the west of Scotland affiliated themselves to the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union with its headquarters in England and under Owenite inspiration.

But for the next three decades or so, Trade Union activity was mostly around the coalfields.

In 1837 there was a colliers' strike involving the pits both in the east and west of Scotland; this strike lasted for 17 weeks when the men were beaten and had to return to work at a wage of 4s. per day. In 1841 there is trace of Scots miners' Unions co-operating with a Miners' National Association for Great Britain. A year later there was a British Miners' conference held in Glasgow where proposals for a General Strike were discussed. Three months after that conference there was a complete Lanarkshire stoppage with the east of Scotland colliers adopting a 'wee darg' policy to keep the market empty and to assist their Lanarkshire comrades.

In July 1845 the Scottish miners joined the New Consolidated Union of Trades for common industrial action, but in 1848—the Chartist year—every attempt at Trade Union organisation in Scotland was being broken by deliberate policy on the part of the employers to flood the labour market with immigrant labour from Ireland; when these Irish labourers arrived the working classes were cleverly set by the ears into quarrels over

Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. In such circumstances unionism on a class or craft basis was paralysed.

By 1852, however, the Scottish Miners' Association had been formed under the guidance of Alexander Macdonald. Macdonald's primary policy was to use the miners' industrial power to persuade the politicians to pass specific reforms such as Coal Mines Regulation Acts. In 1856 there was a Scots miners' strike lasting 14 weeks and involving 30,000 men; in the same year the Scots miners lined up with a short-lived British Miners' National Association; and Alexander Macdonald toured the country advocating an eight-hour day.

The Fife County Miners' Union was born in 1860. In 1863 there was another formation of a National Association of Miners, and this organisation lasted until Macdonald's death in 1881. In 1863 there was a Free Miners' Society in Fife and the Lothians with a password and signs like the Free Masons: John Nicholson of Niddrie was the first Grand Master.

Trades Councils were formed in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1864, and the Glasgow Trades Council, guided by Alexander Campbell, the Owenite, convened what was in effect the first Trade Union Congress; it was held in London for the purpose of stirring up an agitation against the old Master and Servant Act of 1824 which was still being shamefully exploited as a weapon of oppression against the workmen.

In the early 'sixties the active spirits in the Trade Unions saw the necessity of attaching Friendly Society benefits to the Union contributions as a means of giving permanency to their memberships. They began to provide funeral expenses and disablement payments. But one reads also of proposals for concerted restriction of output as a means of raising wages. And Alexander Macdonald toured the mining districts urging the purchase by the miners of a coal-pit "to be run on the co-operative principle"; by the year 1873 he was able to announce that £10,000 had been subscribed for this purpose. The Scottish Unions also

organised emigration societies where the contributors paid 6*d.* for their chance in a ballot of a free passage to America; and during one fortnight in 1865 no fewer than 100 miners, winners in the ballots, were emigrated from Scotland.

In the boom period of the Franco-Prussian War Trade Unionism ran like a prairie fire through the coalfields of Scotland. During 1872 there was achieved the first notable victory obtained by industrial action alone—the concession of the 51-hours week to the Clyde engineers. Alexander Macdonald was procuring resolutions from meetings of workmen in favour of direct Labour representation in Parliament, while old-age pensions were being agitated for from Union funds, there being as yet no conception of a State provision of old-age pensions.

Alas, the depression after the Franco-Prussian War temporarily submerged these pension projects, and nothing further was heard of the Trade Union coal-pit. (I expect the miners had other and more immediate uses in soup kitchens for the £10,000 previously subscribed!) Wages fell to 2*s.* 6*d.* per day, and in most districts the miners' Unions were completely abandoned. Alexander Macdonald nevertheless persisted bravely in his propaganda. Incessantly he urged the policy of the 'wee darg', or restricted output, as the only hope of securing and maintaining a living wage on the coalfields; and in 1879 one notes that he was accorded a vote of thanks for his activities in this direction by a young man called James Keir Hardie, the recently appointed secretary to the Lanarkshire Miners' Union.

Down to the close of the nineteenth century it cannot be said that the purely industrial achievements of the Unions in Scotland were, apart from the Engineers' triumph in the shorter working week, of any great note. But by their organised propaganda and pressure for Factory Acts, shorter hours of labour, legislation to limit the hours of children's employment, the abolition of the Truck Acts, and for drastic amendment of the Master and Servant Acts, the Unions did undoubtedly affect legislation in Parliament.

Every extension of the franchise increased the power of the organised workers to persuade electors and consequently to compel the enactment of industrial legislation in Parliament.

The extent and strength of the workers' industrial organisation north of the Tweed in post-war years was made the subject of a special enquiry by the Scottish Trades Union Congress in 1925-6. While precise statistics could not be obtained from the answers to the Congress Questionnaire owing to the fact that several of the smaller Unions had kept no accurate records of their membership, it was estimated that in Scotland there were at that time some 536,432 Trade Union members. That was out of a total employed population (above 12 years of age) of 1,655,656. In other words, roughly one in every three employed persons was a Trade Unionist. The men workers were found to be much better organised than the women workers.

In 1925-6 there were 90 purely Scottish Trade Unions and 137 United Kingdom Unions with a Scottish membership. The purely Scottish Unions accounted for 40 per cent of the organised workers, and the United Kingdom Unions accounted for 60 per cent. Included in the Scottish Union percentage figure, are the five County Unions within the National Union of Scottish Mineworkers; indeed were it not for the colliers' Scottish Unions the proportion of workers organised upon a United Kingdom basis would be overwhelming. It should, of course, be noted that in the United Kingdom Unions there is usually a considerable local autonomy vested in their Scottish branches and Councils, and these Scottish branches and Councils affiliate to a Scottish Trades Union Congress. The Scottish Congress, unlike its English counterpart, has, however, no international affiliations. It is not represented at international conventions. But in every other respect it exercises the powers and functions of the English Trades Union Congress.

It is difficult to say whether or not there has been any substantial change since the Report of 1925-6 in the

numbers of organised workers in Scotland, relative to the total employed population. Mr. Elger, the Secretary to the Scottish Trades Union Congress, is of opinion that the ratio is unaltered. But even upon the supposition that only one in every three employed persons in Scotland is a Trade Unionist, it is clear to every observer of public affairs that the Trade Unionists exercise a dominating influence in all working-class activities. They are beyond all question the most intelligent, best informed and most active sections of the industrial population. They are the backbone of the political Labour Party, and whatever beneficial reforms and changes have been extracted from the Parliaments of the last half-century or more can be credited in very considerable measure to the prescience and the propaganda of the craft and industrial Unions. They changed public opinion: they have driven both Liberal and Conservative Governments in the direction of social reform; now they have a party of their own, and it is the alternative Government of the United Kingdom.

The Unions supply sick and disablement benefits, retiral pensions, and provide legal advice for their members; they fight workmen's compensation cases in the Law Courts, they raise enormous funds for hospitals and infirmaries, they organise study classes and send students to Ruskin College; they provide candidates and the expenses for election contests for every form of popularly elected body from Parliament to Burgh Councils; they maintain an incessant struggle with the employers for better wages, shorter hours of labour and healthier conditions of employment.

Without the Trade Unions and their activities Scotland might today be little better than a coolie plantation.

TRADE UNIONISM IN WALES

by

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LATE IN THE eighteenth century a line of ironworks was established, from Aberdare to Blaenavon, along the high hills of the northern outcrop of the South Wales coalfield. This was the beginning of modern industrialism in Wales. By 1801 loose organisations of workers were protesting—with violence—against their conditions.

Merthyr Tydfil—until 1861 the largest town in Wales—was the storm centre of the early conflicts. There in 1830 occurred the famous riots, as a result of which Dick Penderyn, the leader, was hanged. In these early struggles, miners and ironworkers joined together in local union clubs to confront their common employer. Only after further industrial development effective contact was established between the valleys and separate organisations for each industrial group appeared.

The ironmasters were autocrats. They met Union organisation with the 'document' and called in the soldiers when protests against bad working conditions and the truck system took the form of public demonstrations or riots. Their works grew so rapidly that it was easy to import Irishmen or English rural workers. The resulting quarrels between national groups made organisation harder and embittered industrial relations. In the early 1830's the terrorist group known as Scotch Cattle sought to intimidate blackleg and employer alike. In the

Chartist movement a few years later South Wales members were among the strongest advocates of physical force. The march on Newport in 1839 was the most revolutionary action of the Chartist campaign.

After a brief period of unity under the Amalgamated Association of Miners, the South Wales miners from 1875 to 1898 were organised in local associations, partly geographical and partly employmental. Wages were determined by the Sliding Scale under a Joint Committee of workers and colliery owners. The dominating figure was William Abraham (Mabon), a most cautious and moderate Liberal-Labour M.P.

Though Mabon was its first President, the establishment in 1898 of the South Wales Miners' Federation, uniting separate local Unions, heralded a new era. By 1903 the Sliding Scale had disappeared; and until 1926 South Wales, led by men such as Hodges, Hartshorn, Ablett and Cook, was in the forefront of every mining struggle—1912, 1915, 1921, and 1926—and exercised almost a dominating influence in the M.F.G.B.

Wales is united only in tradition, and to some extent by language. Geography has inexorably separated it into at least three regions. Geology and the distribution of natural resources sharply mark off two industrial districts, one in the North, and one in the South. There is little in common industrially between these, and very little communication. So far as I know, there has never been a Welsh Trade Union, effectively uniting workers in both North and South. Independent Welsh Unions have been district rather than national Unions.

The population of the five northernmost Welsh counties in 1931 was only 483,527. Much of the area is agricultural and pastoral, and a considerable part of its population depends on tourist trade. Obviously, the number of Trade Unionists cannot be large. Several Unions with interests

in the arca—including the T.G.W.U., N.U.G.M.W., N.U.R., and N.U.D.A.W.—include it with Cheshire or even with Lancashire in their organisation. For this and other reasons, an accurate estimate of the number of Trade Unionists in North Wales cannot be made.

In South Wales the position is clearer. Almost all the industrial population lives in Glamorgan, Monmouth, and Carmarthen—an area so heavily industrialised that almost every British Union having members within it has a district organisation for South Wales. From figures specially collected I have calculated that in 1936 Trade Union membership in South Wales amounted to well over 15 per cent of total population, while in England and Wales it was rather under 12 per cent.

The vast majority of mine-workers are in the North Wales Miners' Association or the South Wales Miners' Federation—both constituents of the M.F.G.B. In North Wales, however, there are two small branches of the Lancashire, Cheshire and North Wales Colliery Engineers' and Brakemens' Federation. In South Wales the corresponding organisation of craftsmen, the South Wales and Monmouthshire Colliery Winding Engineers' Association and Provident Trade Union, has six branches and a membership of nearly 800. The M.F.G.B. also caters for various grades of craftsmen. The headquarters of the General Federation of Colliery Firemen's, Examiners' and Deputies' Associations of Great Britain are in South Wales. This organisation has a separate group for South Wales but includes North Wales with Lancashire and Cheshire. Though it is affiliated to the T.U.C., its members occupy positions of special responsibility, and even authority, in the mines, and are almost minor officials rather than wage-workers.

The S.W.M.F. had at the beginning of 1938 about 121,000 members¹—18,000 being unemployed. Membership has fluctuated considerably, and fell away notably after the failure of the 1926 strike and during the steady fall

¹ Two members under 18 years of age are counted as one.

in employment from 1930 to 1936. Strikes to compel non-Unionists to join are still a prominent feature.

In 1933 the twenty Districts of which the S.W.M.F. was formerly composed were reorganised into eight Areas, without separate funds, and therefore less independent than the previous Districts. Centralisation, however, is by no means complete. Since the adoption of this Constitution membership has increased by 45,000.

During recent years relations with the colliery owners have become easier. Since the last major dispute in 1931 there have been two wage advances—in 1934 as the result of arbitration, and in 1937 by agreement. There is a regularly established Conciliation Board. The 1937 Agreement contains important provisions for settling local disputes through the speeding-up of the machinery; and these have already resulted in a reduction of time lost and improved relations.

After 1926 branches of the Miners' Industrial (non-political) Union were established in South Wales. The organisation attained importance at only two collieries; but its existence provoked fierce hostility. In 1937, however, the Industrial Union was eliminated from the Bedwas Colliery, and in 1938 from the Taff Merthyr Colliery. The next logical step—compulsory Union membership for all wage-earners as part of the collective agreement—is far less remote than it seemed ten years ago.

The iron and steel industry (including tinsplate manufacture) has important branches in Wales. The most important Union is the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, with 4,000 members in North and 33,000 in South Wales. It is represented in all branches of the industry. The National Union of Blastfurnacemen has about 230 members in North and 980 in South Wales.

The most interesting branch of the industry, however, for Welsh Trade Unionism is tinsplate and sheet manufacture. Virtually the whole of this industry is in Wales. Here the I.S.T.C. has about 12,000 members. In the early days of the industry there were several separate organisations.

The Tinsplaters' Union, representing workers in the finishing sheds, disappeared in 1898, in the bad years following the McKinley tariff in the U.S.A. Ben Tillet persuaded these workers to join the Dockers' Union; and today there are 8,000 members (both male and female) of the Transport and General Workers' Union in the industry. Another separate Welsh Union, the Welsh Artisans' Union, mainly in the tinsplate, sheet and silica brick-works of the Llanelly area, was amalgamated in 1936 with the General and Municipal Workers, which therefore now represents about 1,500 workers on the Tinsplate Joint Industrial Council. Relations in this, as in other sections of the Iron and Steel industry, have been remarkably free from stoppages. Rapid rationalisation, following upon the establishment of a huge modern steel and tinsplate plant at Ebbw Vale, makes the future doubtful.

The three railway Unions are all represented in Wales; the N.U.R., with nearly 18,000 members, being the fifth largest Union in South Wales. The A.S.L.E. and F. has 633 members in North and 4,100 in South Wales. The R.C.A. has approximately 3,500, of whom about two-thirds are in South Wales.

All seamen sailing from Welsh ports are in the Seamen's Union; but figures of local membership are naturally not available; nor does the Union play a very prominent part in the Welsh labour movement. Among dock workers, also, there is hundred per cent Union membership, with a registration scheme at all the principal ports. Of the Unions formerly catering for these workers, the Cardiff, Penarth and Barry Coaltrimmers' Union alone decided not to enter the T. and G.W.U. It still retains its independence with a membership of a little over a thousand, and is noteworthy for maintaining a system of pooling work and equalising earnings, which have been kept comparatively high during the depression. The coaltrimmers of the other ports are in the T.G.W.U. which has some 8,800 members in its Docks and Marine Staff sections in South Wales. In road transport, the passenger services

are now almost completely organised, while in the commercial branch membership is steadily increasing.

The engineering trades employ comparatively few workers in South Wales. The A.E.U. has the largest membership—some 8,400. Together with the Boilermakers' Society it is the chief organiser of skilled workers in the ship-repairing yards; but some men in the other grades belong to the T.G.W.U., while in West Wales about 1,500 workers in the foundries and general engineering shops are in the N.U.G.M.W. The United Patternmakers' Association (155 in South Wales), the National Union of Foundryworkers, the Associated Society of Moulders, the British Roll Turners, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, and the E.T.U. also have members in Wales—mainly in the Swansea and Llanelli areas.

The North Wales Quarrymen's Union (8,232) recently became amalgamated with the T.G.W.U., but remains largely autonomous. It is the only Union which can claim that all its officials are Welsh-speaking.¹ Like coalminers, slate-quarry workers live in comparatively isolated communities. The industry, however, has not been noted for frequent disputes. Indeed the Union is chiefly famous for its zeal for education. It played a prominent part in the foundation of the University College at Bangor, and is one of the chief supporters of the W.E.A. In the non-slate quarries throughout Wales, the N.U.G.W.M. is most prominent, though the T.G.W.U. and the Amalgamated National Union of Quarryworkers and Settmakers are also represented.

In the chemical and non-ferrous metal industries (including the oil refinery near Neath) the T.G.W.U. has a large membership. It has also successfully organised the workers in Welsh flannel weaving, the fishermen of Cardiff, Swansea and Milford, as well as the trawler engineers.

¹ By no means all the miners' officials in Wales are Welsh-speaking. Among the other chief unions, only the N.U.D.A.W., the N.U.G.M.W. and the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers reported, in answer to a questionnaire, that they find it advantageous to have Welsh-speaking organisers.

It is also the chief organiser for the flourmill workers, while in food production the Amalgamated Union of Operative Bakers is most prominent, with 180 members in North and 970 in South Wales. In agriculture, both the general labour Unions and the National Union of Agricultural Workers have members; but the wide prevalence of family farming does not make for successful Trade Unionism. The building trades are well organised. The A.U.B.T.W. has about 250 members in North and nearly 2,000 in South Wales. The Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers has more than 500 members in North and 3,480 in South Wales, while the Plumbers, Painters, and other craft Unions are also represented. The N.U.G.M.W. has members among the labourers. The National Federation of Building Trades Operatives represents the workers in the South Wales Regional Joint Committee for the industry.

In the public services there is a high degree of organisation, especially in South Wales. The Union of Post Office Workers has about 2,400 members in South Wales. In the health services the N.U.G.M.W. organises all workers—roadmen, scavengers, lorry drivers, sweepers, etc.—and represents them on the county Joint Wages Boards. It is also the chief organisation of workers in electricity supply, in which, however, the T.G.W.U., the A.E.U. and the E.T.U. also have members. In water-works, the N.U.G.M.W. is the sole Union recognised. In other branches of local authority services, the Union of Public Employees and the National Association of Local Government Officers both have substantial memberships. Membership of a professional organisation is almost universal amongst teachers; but some of these would be shocked if they were referred to as Trade Unions. The N.U.T., by far the largest organisation, has more than 15,000 members in Wales.

In most service occupations outside public control, the strength of Trade Unionism is not conspicuously greater in Wales than elsewhere. The N.U.D.A.W. has 3,150 members in Wales, including both the distributive and

the manufacturing sides of the Co-operative movement. The Shop Assistants have approximately 6,500 members, and the National Union of Clerks rather less than 600. In the printing trades organisation is very strong, and the Typographical Association has more than a thousand members in South and nearly 400 in North Wales.

Apart from the Miners' Federation, the T.G.W.U., the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, the N.U.G.M.W. and the N.U.R. are the chief Unions in Wales. It is clear, therefore, that the regular British Unions are acceptable to the workers. In general Union membership is remarkably stable, especially in South Wales; but not nearly so aggressive as is often supposed. Clearly, the workers in Wales would be in a much weaker economic position if they were organised in separate Welsh Unions.

It is notable that the economic problems peculiar to the Welsh Regions have not led to the emergence of any strong regional labour organisations. There is a North Wales Federation of Labour Parties, which, however, is mainly concerned with details of organisation, rather than with a special regional policy. In the South, there have long existed county federations of Trades Councils, some fairly active, some moribund, if not dead. But, during the depression, with its unemployment and migration, there was no sign of a united Labour policy for the rehabilitation of the area. Local authorities, completely controlled by the Labour Party, followed mutually contradictory policies, while in the party as a whole it was many years before the existence of a special regional problem was even recognised. During 1936, however, the foundations of a new body, the South Wales Council of Action, were laid. It was a development of an unemployed march on London, organised mainly by the S.W.M.F. and the Cardiff Trades Council. In the Council of Action, Mr. Arthur Horner, the President of the S.W.M.F., and other Communists were prominent. The Labour Party head office therefore in 1937 established an alternative organisation, the South

Wales Regional Council of Labour. This body's constitution prevents Communists from holding office. All the principal Unions, including the S.W.M.F., are affiliated and make contributions out of both their political and their industrial funds. It is too early yet to assess its importance. Obviously it has great potentialities.

The two main problems facing the movement are the organisation of women and the unionisation of the new industries. The latter are being introduced into Wales far more rapidly than most people realise, and are likely to employ a large proportion of female workers.

Outside the tinplate trades, the hollow-ware factories in the Llanelly district (not those in Cardiff and Barry), the laundries and the domestic staffs of public institutions, there is little or no organisation of women manual workers in South Wales. The tobacco and confectionery workers, for example, are unorganised. Among male workers, Trade Unionism has failed to make headway in the expanding furniture industry of Cardiff. The National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers has, however, one branch for the wholesale clothing workers of Cardiff. The hopeful element is the success of the general labour Unions (especially the T.G.W.U.) among the women rayon workers of Flint, and of the N.U.G.M.W. in certain newly established factories on the Treforest Trading Estate. Employers will come to Wales in search of the abundant female labour available in the mining districts. They will find these women as alert and adaptable as any in the country. But the strong Trade Union traditions can be relied upon to prevent exploitation and see that similar industries elsewhere are not undercut by unfair competition. In such conditions, the advent of the new industries, augmenting family incomes and serving to balance the heavy industries, will benefit not only the depressed areas, but the whole of Great Britain.

TRADE UNION DIFFICULTIES IN NEW AREAS

by

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THE LACK OF a Trade Union tradition, comparable with that prevalent in the mining, railway and cotton industries, is a serious obstacle in the way of the organisation of workers in the new industries. Time alone will not overcome this lack, for it is complicated by a number of difficulties which arise from the differing conditions between the south and Midlands and the north of England. An attempt is here made to enumerate some of these difficulties, though their relative importance is hard to estimate and varies locally.

ABSENCE OF LOCAL SOLIDARITY

The disappointing fact that in the areas where the demand for workers is greatest labour organisation is weakest, is largely due to the absence of homogeneity among the inhabitants, many of whom are immigrants into the new industrial areas, to the diversity of the types and conditions of work, and, in some cases, to the small size of the employing firms. These obstacles in the way of the organiser are aggravated in all large towns, particularly in Greater London, by the fact that the homes of the workers are frequently scattered over areas far removed from their place of employment. There is thus little opportunity for a sense of solidarity among fellow-workers

to rest on a basis of neighbourly contacts or even of family life. It is very difficult for a factory organiser to meet men outside working hours. In any case, by the time many workers get home they have little time or energy left for Trade Union activities.

If there is little chance of ventilating common grievances outside working hours, there is still less chance inside. There is no doubt that a number of firms carry on assiduous spying which leads to victimisation of employees suspected of organisation. In some large firms, such as Ford's—and this policy is by no means exceptional—the workers are subjected to wholesale regimentation from the moment they enter the factory gates. They must at all times wear the firm's badge. They may not talk or congregate in groups, or enter other departments. Visits to the lavatory are limited in number, and smoking or talking there is reported.

Among the reasons which keep the young from joining Trade Unions is that, in addition to the absence of a Trade Union tradition, there is little training required for entry into the newer industries. At the same time it is relatively easy for the young to find work of some kind in the south of England. This tends to encourage a sense of independence which militates against their submission to organisation by their elders—a position very different from that in industries where a long apprenticeship brings the young into close contact with, and dependence on, the old, and where there is better mutual understanding between them. Ways of overcoming this tendency to irresponsibility in the young by means of special organisation of those under 25 need to be considered. Where necessary a Youth Movement, possibly with reduced dues, should be developed by the Trade Union concerned, to work in close co-operation with the adult movement, so that as far as possible the organisers shall be of the same age and outlook as the organised. It is to be hoped that the national campaign in support of the T.U.C. Charter of Youth in Industry will lead to some successful experiments in this direction.

To what extent early marriages are an obstacle is doubtful in the case of men. They undoubtedly produce a new sense of responsibility which may often be favourable to organisation. This responsibility, on the other hand, is made a very heavy one by the common practice of starting married life by buying a home and furniture by instalments. This naturally makes a man hesitate before taking the risks of victimisation for Trade Union activity or of becoming involved in a strike. It is noticeable that many firms appear deliberately to prefer to employ young married men who are tied in this way.

In the case of women early marriage is undoubtedly an obstacle. Whereas in the older industries there is often a high percentage of married women employed, the new industries, by choice and by necessity, chiefly employ young women who leave work on marriage. The ephemeral nature of female employment applies not only to shops and offices, but also to the new factories, and presents a serious problem to the organiser.

The haunting fear of losing employment, perhaps for good, combined with a natural conservatism, holds back the elderly who have not been nurtured in a Trade Union environment. The most promising years for recruitment are from 25 to 40. Labour organisers should be encouraged by the present high proportion of the population of this age in the areas to which the new industries have attracted an influx of young people in recent years (the insured workers in London and south-east England have increased by 23 per cent since 1929, and in the Midlands and south-west England by 19 per cent).

THE PRICE OF HIGH WAGES

Another type not readily amenable to organisation is the migrant worker, coming in considerable numbers from Lancashire, Durham, South Wales and Ireland. Local hostility tends in many areas to keep them out of branches of such organisations as there are; and, in any case, even

those who have been brought up in a sound Trade Union environment often feel that organisation is superfluous, since the relatively high wages obtainable in South England seem like Eldorado attained. Having few local interests, they are not discouraged by long and intensive work. In the case of many Irish immigrants, it is also alleged that the anti-Union influence of the priest is not negligible.

The disorganising effect of high wages, or indeed wages at all, is specially noticeable in the case of men from the distressed areas, who are anxious to avoid all risk of endangering their new-found prosperity, which may be the first they have ever experienced. Besides this they are often endcavouring to pay off old debts, while at the same time maintaining a home for themselves and supporting their parents and sometimes their families, whom they have left behind. Furthermore the presence of such 'outsiders' increases the lack of local homogeneity which, as has been seen, stands in the way of labour solidarity in the south of England.

It is not only by bringing contentment to the workers that high wages militate against Trade Unionism. They are not given for nothing, but usually for excessively intensive work. The result is that workers in many modern mass-producing factories not only fear that, once discharged, they will never get as good a job again, but they may find it hard to get any work at all, since employers tend to avoid men whom they consider to be worked out. Moreover, intensive work day after day without talking undoubtedly tends to produce a tragic state of mental dullness, in addition to physical weariness, which is most unhelpful to the organiser.

Employers have not yet resorted to the device of supporting company Unions, but they may yet do so if they should find it necessary. Should this become an acute problem it might be necessary for the T.U.C. to consider bringing its whole influence to bear on the Government to establish a board such as the American National Labour Relations Board, whose chief function in industrial

disputes is to investigate unfair practices of this kind which have been made illegal.

Welfare work seems to present little difficulty, except in a few cases where participation by employees is rewarded by the firm. In one case it is stated that men who regularly take part in the company's sports receive, among other advantages, an extra 2*d.* an hour in wages. This is a clear attempt by a firm which regulates the working hours of its employees with military discipline socially to sterilise their spare hours as well with 'innocent' diversions.

ADAPTATION TO NEW CONDITIONS

The increasing distraction of entertainments, wireless, improved travelling facilities, and of amenities like gardens on housing estates, complicates the organiser's task. It is an increase resulting to a considerable extent from the growth of the unorganised industries themselves, catering, as they do, largely for leisure activities. It is significant that even in the slump years 1929-32, while Trade Union membership was falling by 414,000 and employment in the 'productive' industries by 1,169,000, there was a rise of 206,000 employed in the 'service' industries, which by 1937 accounted for 36 per cent of the insured persons in employment. Such a change in the occupations of the community cannot come about except in conjunction with a remarkable change in social habits of which account must be taken.

In short, Trade Union organisers have to face keener competition, particularly in districts where the Trade Union tradition is weakest. How they can best adapt their methods to do so is dealt with elsewhere in this book; but a few general suggestions are made here in the light of the difficulties mentioned in this chapter.

It must be admitted that the failure of Trade Unionism to make greater progress in the new industries is at least as much due to the Trade Unions themselves as to the circumstances in which they work. In the first place,

branch meetings are undoubtedly often very dull, and many organisers are uninspiring. There is apt to be too much formal reading of minutes and correspondence and in general a red tape atmosphere which is particularly irritating to the young. The whole conduct of the meetings dates from the pre-cinema era. Lack of education among the older Trade Union organisers often aggravates this difficulty; for the young workers, who are now better educated, are inclined to laugh at what they consider to be rather bombastic pre-war methods. This tendency should certainly be guarded against, for, unless checked, it may in a vicious circle result in a further narrowing of the whole outlook of a branch.

Again, much of the publicity used to build up membership is out of date. This has been realised in some Unions, but amateur leaflets of the 'Be a Sport—Join Your Trade Union' type have not made up for the lack of professional advice and experience. When this has been used, as in the recent campaign among nurses, it has been fully justified by results.

Another temptation to be avoided is the spasmodic organisation of the workers in protest against some particular grievance—a tendency not confined to left-wing organisers although they are specially prone to it. The organiser should, of course, make full use of spontaneous discontent in obtaining recruits, but he will not succeed in building up a solid organisation on the basis of temporary grievances alone without instilling into the members a consciousness of the fundamental purposes of Trade Unionism. There will naturally be healthy differences of opinion as to how long Trade Unions should remain content to protect the interests of the workers under capitalism, and to what extent and in what form they should share in the control of the productive system under Socialism; but, *whatever* the views of the members as to their ultimate aims, there is an overwhelming case for the immediate organisation of labour on a basis of stability and solidarity.

LONG-TERM *v.* SHORT-TERM ORGANISATION

An organiser who relies on sporadic grievances alone is casting his seed on stony ground. If in such a case action against the employer fails, the workers are disillusioned; if it succeeds, they are apt to feel that further organisation is unnecessary, so that any ground which has been gained is gradually lost. This is apart from the very grave difficulties with which Trade Union headquarters are faced by sudden 'unofficial' strikes.

On the other hand, it is only by maintaining a keen interest in the welfare of the workers in particular factories and areas that any Trade Union can hope to retain its virility and its power to attract new members. The problem of allowing adequate local autonomy to the branches while maintaining a strong and efficient central organisation in the Unions which include general workers is the most difficult which has to be faced. This problem naturally arises in a much more acute form in the case of Unions whose members work in entirely varying conditions from industry to industry and from factory to factory, than in the old craft Unions whose primary aim has been to lay down standard conditions of employment for a whole trade.

It is largely failure to surmount this obstacle which is causing many of the live wires in the new industrial areas to ignore the solid drudgery of Trade Union organisation, and to devote their energies to political work which gives more immediate scope to their activities. It cannot be denied that this is a source of satisfaction to many employers, who frequently turn a blind eye to the politics of an employee provided he keeps clear of Trade Union organisation. This is a matter of grave concern to the whole labour movement, and one which local trades councils in particular should consider. Political organisation is a useful ally but not a substitute for Trade Union organisation.

Despite all the difficulties in the way, the present seems a favourable moment to launch a Trade Union membership campaign in the new areas. Recent increases of numbers have given encouragement. In many new areas, where a large number of comparatively well-paid men are prevented by their employers from joining Trade Unions, the Labour vote has been rising steadily in recent elections. A vigorous and well-organised campaign should enable this discontent to find industrial as well as political outlets. The new Unions of miscellaneous workers, however, cannot capture the old craft Union spirit. In its place they must foster a collective faith giving scope for discussion and action on local grievances, and at the same time inspiring the members with a consciousness of the power and solidarity of labour as a whole as the keystone of the productive system.

WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONS

by

BARBARA DRAKE, L.C.C.

Author of Women in Trade Unions.

THERE ARE TODAY 802,000 women in Trade Unions, of whom 451,000 are affiliated to the T.U.C. The largest group is in the professions and public services—330,000, of whom 160,000 are teachers, and 55,000 Civil Service and municipal clerks. The largest industrial group is in textiles—230,000, of whom 162,000 are cotton operatives. With women as with men, Trade Union membership follows closely the curve of trade prosperity. In the peak year 1920, membership rose to 1,342,000, and fell to 728,000 in 1933. There is now a new upward movement; the National Union of General and Municipal Workers has within the last year increased its female membership from 19,000 to 45,000.

Women are less highly organised than men. About one in three of all employed males belong to Unions,¹ and only one in nine of employed women. The figure varies widely from one occupation to another. About 75 per cent of women teachers are organised. Of women textile operatives 30 per cent are organised, of printing and paper workers 24 per cent, of boot and shoe operatives 50 per cent, of tailoresses and garment makers 10 per cent, of commercial and distributive workers 7 per cent, of engineering and metal workers 6 per cent.

Men and women belong for the most part to the same Unions. Of the scores of all-women's societies established

¹ The estimate is based on the Census figures, 1931, and includes unemployed persons.

by the Women's Trade Union League,¹ few survived long, or the women joined a men's Union as the latter decided to admit them. There are today only three all-women's societies affiliated to the T.U.C.—the Felt Hat Trimmers and Wool Formers (3,600 members)—a closely allied society of the Journeymen Felt Hatters—the Women Clerks and Secretaries (2,000 members), and the Women Public Health Officers (1,700 members). Neither the Amalgamated Engineering Union, nor the Electrical Trades Union, admits women to membership, and women in engineering and allied trades are catered for by general labour Unions. The National Union of General and Municipal Workers includes, together with domestic workers, dressmakers, laundry workers, textile operatives, food and chemical workers, municipal employees, and unskilled men labourers, some thousands of women in engineering. The Women's Engineering Society caters for women of the professional grade only, and has not more than 200 members.

The only all-women's society which has at any time attained to Trade Union eminence is the National Federation of Women Workers. Established by the W.T.U.L. in 1906 on the model of a general labour Union, the Federation grew to 80,000 strong during the war and, under the brilliant leadership of Mary Macarthur, was for many years the recognised Trade Union authority on women's questions. Its subsequent amalgamation with the National Union of General and Municipal Workers took place on equal terms. The women formed at first a separate 'women's district' with their own representative on the executive and their own delegates to the T.U.C. and Labour Party Conference, but the constitution was afterwards changed by mutual consent. Men and women today

¹ Established in 1874 by a group of middle-class feminists and philanthropists, the W.T.U.L. continued in being until after the war. While its earlier policy was concentrated on the forming of all-women's societies, it took afterwards an active part in assisting the men's unions to organise women, and became a recognised centre to which were affiliated the leading Unions catering for women.

are organised together in the same 'districts' or branches, and there is no separate representation of female members.

Women are commonly admitted to Trade Union membership at one-half or two-thirds the men's contribution and receive corresponding benefits, but there is seldom any other differentiation, and women can occupy any office. Margaret Bondfield was President of the T.U.C. in 1923. Few women succeed, nevertheless, to responsible positions. The cotton weavers' Unions have a long and honourable record in organising women. Yet the 75,000 female members of the Amalgamated Weavers' Union, four-fifths of the total membership, have never had a woman on the executive, and comparatively few women serve on district committees. The Union is entirely officered by men, and there are seldom more than two or three women out of thirty-six delegates attending the T.U.C. The women are said to be unambitious, to lack the necessary technical qualifications, or to have "complete confidence in their men officials". The tradition of an earlier age plays, in an old-established Union no doubt, its part in the conspicuous absence of women in responsible positions. The comparatively modern Dundee Union of Jute and Flax Workers (1,650 men, 6,450 women) reserves to women twelve places out of twenty-four on the executive, but this practically unique constitution was framed in consultation with the W.T.U.L. The National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers (60,000 men, 25,500 women) has one woman on the executive elected in open competition, and a majority of women on some district committees. The National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (19,000 men, 46,600 women) has two women on the executive, one place being reserved to women, and one woman being elected in open competition. There are also women on district committees. Following the common practice, men and women are organised together in 'mixed' branches, but with one exception—the West End London Tailoresses. The women here are employed by men members, and have separate

and sometimes conflicting interests. The National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives (54,000 men, 28,700 women) has one woman on the executive representing the Leicester Women's Branch of 5,000 members, and places are reserved to women on district committees. The National Union of Printing, Bookbinding and Paper Workers (33,400 men, 26,300 women) has four women out of twenty-four members of the executive, all elected in open competition. The women bookfolders—once an independent women's society—still form in London a separate women's branch within the Union. The Distributive and Allied Workers (113,450 men, 44,650 women), the Shop Assistants (42,000 men, 17,800 women), the National Union of Clerks (6,000 men, 4,000 women), have had women in executive positions, but none in recent years. Nor is there a single woman on the executives of the great general labour Unions. The National Union of General and Municipal Workers (450,000 men, 45,000 women), however, has a 'women's department' in charge of a chief woman officer. Most Unions today outside the textile trades appoint women organizers, who act in many cases as the women's representatives at Trade Union and other conferences.

With the passing of the W.T.U.L. the T.U.C. agreed to reserve to women two places on the General Council. Women may also be elected in open competition, but none has been nominated since Margaret Bondfield succeeded to the position under the old constitution. There is an Annual Conference of Unions catering for women, with power to make recommendations to the Trades Union Council, and also a National Advisory Committee on Women's Organisation, five members being appointed by the Trades Union Council, and five by the Women's Conference. Trade Union women, together with women co-operators and representatives of Labour Party 'women's sections', find again another channel of expression in the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations, which is responsible for organising the National Labour Women's Conference.

The S.J.C. has taken a leading part in promoting legislation affecting women, and its reports have afterwards been adopted by the National Labour Party Conference. Trade Union women further are represented at the International Conference of Trade Union Women, which reports in turn to the International Federation of Trade Unions.

Women have proved beyond question their capacity to organise, and individuals have shown conspicuous qualities of leadership, but women are nevertheless relatively weak in Trade Union organisation and play a minor part in Trade Union councils. The reasons are not far to seek. Nearly one-half of all women gainfully occupied are young girls under 25, who expect to retire on marriage. In the food and tobacco trades, in printing and paper-making, one-third are young girls under 18. Women, in consequence, are less prepared than men to undergo a prolonged period of training, and employers less willing to train them; and they belong mostly to semi-skilled and unskilled trades which are notoriously difficult to organise. Even in the traditional women's trades, skill amounts seldom to more than the normal feminine ability to cook, or clean, or sew. Or organisation is prejudiced, as in skilled domestic service, by the close contact of the worker with a social class not her own, but in whose luxury she shares to some extent.

"Women are unorganised," Mary Macarthur declared, "because they are badly paid, and badly paid because they are unorganised." Men and women cotton weavers receive the same piece-work rate, but women predominate, and average earnings represent a *women's* rather than a *men's* standard. The following table shows the average earnings of adult workers (21 years and over) in a full week:—

	3-loom	4-loom	6-loom ¹
Men	37/5	40/3	46/8½
Women	31/3	37/9½	43/6½

¹ "The Weavers Wage", 1937, E. M. Gray *Economic Research Section, Manchester University*. About 70 per cent of men and 80 per cent of women are employed on 4 looms or less

Apart from cotton weavers, men and women are seldom employed on the same job, or men are employed on nightwork only. Average weekly earnings of corresponding grades of men and women in the card, blowing and ring-room sections are estimated at 50s. and 30s. respectively. In tailoring and garment making, the men's piece-work basic time-rate is 1s. 4½*d.* an hour, and the women's 8½*d.*¹ In boot and shoe making, men's time-rates are 48s. 6*d.* to 54s. a week, and women's 25s. to 36s., average earnings in organised shops being estimated at 70s. and 48s. respectively. In printing and bookbinding, men's weekly time-rates (journeymen excluded) are 47s. 6*d.* to 74s. 6*d.*, and women's 28s. to 38s., with special rates for London. In engineering, a common rate for semi-skilled men is 1s. 3*d.* or 1s. 5*d.* an hour, while women's rates (18–21 years) in 'federated' shops vary according to two separate schedules from 26s. to 30s. a week, and 22s. to 26s. a week, average earnings of all grades over 18 being estimated at 35s. a week. Under the Trade Boards Acts, men's rates vary between 10½*d.* and 1s. 4½*d.* an hour, and women's rates between 5¼*d.* and 10¼*d.*, a common women's rate being 6½*d.* or 7½*d.* In the distributive trades, an agreement between the leading unions and the Co-operative Union gives male shop assistants (21–23 years) 55s. to 64s. a week, and female assistants (21 years) 35s. 6*d.* while male clerks (21–23 years) receive 55s. to 68s., and female clerks (21–22 years) 37s. and 46s. 6*d.* Another recent agreement between the National Union of Shop Assistants and the Union of Multiple Shop Proprietors (Grocery and Provisions)², estimated to cover 100,000 workers, gives male assistants (21–24 years) 38s. to 55s. a week, and female assistants (21–24 years) 28s. to 34s., the London rate being 3s. higher in each case. In the unorganised sections of the industry, women shop

¹ The following time-rates are agreed rates between the leading unions and employers' organizations. They do not apply to all districts or firms, but tend to set the pace. Piece-rates are estimated so as to yield 25 per cent on the basic time-rate. The adult rate for women operates in most cases as from the age of 18

assistants are said to earn as little as 12s., 10s., and 8s. 6d a week.

Low wages in the distributive trades are at least partly due to the extensive employment of juveniles, and the Women's Conference in 1936 put forward a claim for legislation to limit the proportion of juveniles to adults. Other complaints are made against married women, or girls living at home, who work for pocket-money only, and accept less than living wage. Except among single women at times of widespread unemployment, there is no desire to interfere with married women's work, and women clerks as well as women teachers have protested against the practice of dismissal on marriage, but there is keen resentment against unfair competition from the 'pocket-money' worker.

The problem of juvenile labour again is acute in women's branches of engineering, where the growing use of 'automatic' machines has reduced to a minimum the value of trade experience. Girls over 18 are discharged in favour of girls straight from school, who compare in output not unfavourably with adults, but are paid at juvenile rates of wages. The Women's Conference claims in this case that agreements shall be altered so as "to make adults' wages on automatic processes operate after one month's training".

The depressed standard of women's wages reacts in turn on men's wages, and relationships have often been strained in consequence. The problem of 'unfair female competition' dates from early days. As the progress of machinery, together with new subdivisions of labour, brought one trade after another, hitherto reserved to the skilled craftsman, within reach of semi-skilled workers, employers soon introduced 'cheap and docile' female labour. Already in 1811¹ the Company of Master Tailors complained that "the journeyman's rules precluded the wife and children from earning one shilling in the way which the husband and father can best instruct them".

¹ B. Drake, *Women in Trade Unions*, Part I.

The Journeyman Tailors' Society replied indignantly: "Have not women been unfairly driven from their proper sphere in the home, unfeelingly torn from the maternal duties of a parent, and unjustly encouraged to compete with men in ruining the money value of labour?"

"The fear that women will lower wages," the W.T.U.L. reported in the 'seventies, "has led men to pass rules in many of their trade societies positively forbidding members to work with women." By the end of the century hardly a men's Union had not been concerned with the problem. After frantic but mostly futile efforts to drive women out, the men's Unions, one after another, decided to admit women as members, and so to confine them to recognised women's trades, or to non-Union districts. The Amalgamated Tailors took the lead, and resolved in 1877 that "the work of women must be recognised, and the time has come when it should be organised and properly remunerated". In 1887 the T.U.C. passed its first resolution that "where women do the same work as men, they shall receive equal pay"; and a general campaign was started to organise women for wage advances. "Please send an organiser at once, for our Amalgamated Society has decided that, if the women of this town cannot be organised, they must be exterminated." This ultimatum received by the W.T.U.L. in the early nineteen-hundreds expressed at the time a not uncommon masculine state of mind.

A typical pre-war debate took place at the Trades Union Congress of 1909, when the Birmingham Brass Workers put forward a motion to make illegal the employment of women in "metal polishing, turning and screwing". On behalf of the N.F.W.W., Mary Macarthur at once pointed out that hundreds of women were already employed in these trades, and they had not been consulted. She easily carried an amendment, deploring "the growing tendency to substitute underpaid women's labour for men's labour", reaffirming "the principle of equal pay", and calling upon women to organise so as "to put a stop to

a competition which is as unfair as it is detrimental to the interests of men and women alike”.

The war brought the problem to a head. Between 1914 and 1918 there was an influx into industry of a million and a quarter women, the great majority employed in place of men. The struggle centred in the munitions trades. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers had successfully resisted attempts by employers to introduce women, and female labour was practically confined to the Birmingham small metal trades, and to boys' operations in non-Union shops. When a great armament firm introduced women in shell-making at about half the men's wages, the men found themselves seriously threatened for the first time.

Following a series of abortive conferences, the Government decided to interfere. Under the so-called 'Treasury' agreement, the men's Unions consented to relax their rules and regulations, while the Government undertook in return to secure that the admission of female labour should not "affect adversely the rate customarily paid for the job". The terms were subsequently interpreted by the Government to mean the men's *piece-rate*, but not the men's *time-rate*, and the bottom was knocked out of the agreement. Not only were thousands of 'substituted' women employed on time-work, but in the general readjustment of processes the men's piece-rate had disappeared with the job. "What can one do," exclaimed a candid employer to H.M. Factory Inspector,¹ "when a girl is earning as much as 15s. a week except lower the piece-rate!"

The general attitude of employers during the war appeared in the official organ of the Employers' Engineering Federation:—

“The fact of the matter is really not that women are paid too little—or much too little—but that men are paid too much for work which can be done without previous training. High wages are paid on the false

¹ Annual Report of the Chief Lady Factory Inspector, 1915.

assumption, now almost obscured by Trade Union regulations, that it takes long to learn a craft. Everyone knows now, as all managers knew long ago, that no long period of training is necessary, and the whole argument for high wages based on long training falls to the ground.”¹

The N.F.W.W. was not a party to the ‘Treasury’ agreement, but now approached the engineering Unions with a view to securing, not merely ‘equal pay’ for ‘substituted’ women, but a living wage for all women munition workers. The engineering Unions were not prepared to admit women to membership, but they were keenly alive to the need for organising women, and to the advantages of co-operation with the women’s society. As an immediate result, the women secured a minimum wage of £1 a week, with special rates for substituted women. Similar campaigns were undertaken in other industries, and women poured into the Unions. Between 1914 and 1918, the total female membership rose from 430,000 to 1,200,000. In many depressed women’s trades, war advances amounted to 200 per cent on the pre-war standard, or a rise of 50 per cent in real wages. ‘Substituted’ women received as a rule rates about half-way between the men’s rate, and the rate paid to other women in the same industry. It is significant that the small groups who secured ‘equal pay’ were those, such as women bus conductors, whose employers had no intention of retaining them after the war.

The N.F.W.W. gave wholehearted support to the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act. Within a year of the Armistice, over three-quarters of a million women had retired from industry or returned to women’s trades, but the field of women’s employment still expanded. Between 1911 and 1931, the number of employed females increased by 840,000. Between 1923 and 1935, employed females increased by 18·3 per cent,² and employed males

¹ *The Engineer*, Oct., 1915.

² Ministry of Labour figures.

by 9.2 per cent. In all manufactures, women increased by 6.9 per cent, and men by 5.5 per cent. In a group of twelve industries, comprising general engineering and tailoring, women *increased* and men *decreased*, by about 10 per cent in each case. This is not necessarily because women have replaced men—though recently in engineering women have been introduced into skilled trades at about half the men's rate—but because more women than men are employed in new and expanding industries. The cheapness of female labour has certainly been a governing factor in the rapid advance of women in engineering. With the end of the short post-war boom, the Engineering Employers' Federation at once took steps to reduce women's time-rates from 43s. 6d. a week to 16s. *plus* an 8s. bonus, while the age at which women became entitled to the adult rate was raised from 18 to 21 years. These rates were perforce accepted by the women, but no agreement was signed by the women's Unions. No substantial advances were secured until 1936-7.

The Women's Conference in 1936 expressed alarm at "the enormous increase in the number of women and girls being absorbed into industry at low wage rates, which are a constant menace to established male rates", and recommended the T.U.C. to examine the subject "with a view to co-operating in the establishment of adequate rates of pay for women and girls, which are related to the economic rights and needs of women in industry". Industrial women do not share the extreme feminist view which is opposed to all Trade Union regulation, or protective legislation, discriminating between men and women workers, but they are determined to defend their sex against outside interference in their choice of occupation. The International Conference of Trade Union Women in 1936 noted "with indignation and regret that in most countries the Governments, as a consequence of the economic crisis, are still trying to meddle with women's right to work, and even to prohibit it with the idea of helping thereby to relieve unemployment", and the women

claimed an equal right with men to the freedom of industry. The Conference recommended that "in view of the ever growing opposition in certain circles to women working in industry", an immediate campaign should be undertaken in favour of 'equal pay.'

The problem of 'equal pay', unfortunately, is not simple. "The worker is paid for his work", but other factors besides enter into wages. Needs cannot, in practice, be ignored. So long as the normal working-man is expected to provide for the maintenance of his family, and the normal working-woman is not, this distinction will inevitably be reflected in wages, even though some men remain bachelors, and some women support dependants. Recent enquiries into household budgets suggest that the large families of dependent children suffer the greatest discrepancy between needs and income. This reacts on the market price of male and female labour, and employers see in 'equal pay' a threat to their vested interest in 'cheap and docile' female labour. Not even a public authority—not every great Trade Union office—sees its way to pay more than a 'fair market price' for a particular class of labour. As the Departmental Committee on Teachers' Salaries pointed out, a salary which will attract a woman of certain educational qualifications and social standing, will not attract a man of corresponding status. The problem is thus closely bound up with the social and economic position of women. Nor can it be solved without profound social and economic changes. That these changes are even now taking place may be seen in the growing desire of women for economic independence, after as well as before marriage, and the new importance attached by them in consequence to trade and professional training, in the diminishing size of the family, in the rising demand for nursery schools, for school meals, for children's play centres and holiday camps, for release of the mother from never-ending drudgery in the house, in the nascent public recognition that some provision outside wages is necessary for the adequate maintenance of the dependent family. Until

women play a fuller and more equal part in industry, they cannot expect to take a leading place in Trade Unions, but they have nevertheless an active and important part to fill. From half a century of experience, men and women have learned that their great strength lies in mutual understanding and acceptance of each other's point of view, and in close working alliance within a common organisation. So together they may build a strong and sound Trade Unionism.

THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

TRADE UNIONISM is a world-wide movement. In every developing capitalist country it has come into existence with the growth of Capitalism itself. Wherever the workers are brought under the domination of the wage system in mines and factories employing considerable masses of labour, Trade Unionism develops as the instinctive answer to capitalist exploitation. Not 'theorists' or 'agitators', but the sheer necessities of working-class life, bring Trade Unionism into existence.

Until only a few years ago, there were Trade Union movements, of varying strength and character, in all the developed capitalist countries. But today in Italy and Germany, and to a considerable extent in Japan, Trade Unionism has been stamped out of existence; and a like fate has befallen it in lesser countries which have come under Fascist domination. For one of the first acts of every Fascist Government is to destroy the Trade Unions, as the basic instrument of working-class independence and democratic action. Usually—as in Germany, Italy and Austria—the Fascist dictators attempt to substitute for the democratic Unions created by the workers themselves Fascist organisations controlled from above by nominees of the Fascist Party, as means of regimenting the workers for the service of the Totalitarian State. Italy has its Fascist 'syndicates' and 'corporations', Germany its 'Labour Front', and Austria had until 1938 its Christian Co-operative Unions under Schuschnigg's authority.

Of course, none of these bodies are Trade Unions in any real sense. They exist to discipline the workers, not to defend their interests. They have no power to strike, or to pass claims for improved conditions against the will of the Fascist leaders. They are relevant here because the crushing of Trade Unionism in the Fascist countries has for the time being taken the working classes of these countries right out of the international movement, and seriously weakened Trade Unionism as an international force.

Today, the main strength of Trade Unionism is in the parliamentary countries of Western Europe, in the United States, and in the Soviet Union. In 1936, the latest date for which comprehensive figures are available, by far the largest Trade Union movement in the world was in the Soviet Union, with well over twenty million members. Great Britain came next, with about five millions, and then the United States, with rather over four millions. Spain and France had each rather more than two millions, and Mexico about a million. Belgium, Sweden, Czechoslovakia and Australia had each over three-quarters of a million, and Holland and Poland over half a million. For India and Japan it is impossible to give figures, but with these as possible exceptions no other country had as many as half a million.

These totals include Trade Unions of many different tendencies—Communist, Syndicalist, Social Democratic and Christian Social, as well as Unions not attached to any political party or social tendency. They exclude only Fascist Unions, definitely organised under the authority of the Corporative State. Moreover, they take no account of the size of the various countries or of their industrial populations. The three-quarters of a million Trade Unionists in Sweden form a much larger proportion of the population than the four millions in the United States or the five millions in Great Britain. So do the 350,000 in Denmark, or the 220,000 in Norway, in relation to the industrial population of their countries. Trade

Unionism is strongest of all in Scandinavia, if we except the special case of the Soviet Union.

Nor must it be forgotten that these figures are already two years old. In most countries, except those in which the movement was being forcibly repressed, Trade Unions were gaining ground in 1936 and 1937, as industry recovered from the effects of the world depression and the workers began to struggle again for improved wages and conditions in face of advancing prices. In two countries, especially, the movement made huge leaps forward. In France, side by side with the electoral victory of the *Front Populaire*, there was a tremendous industrial advance. Ever since the war French Trade Unionism had been divided into warring factions—the old central body, the *Confédération Générale du Travail*, and its Communist rival, the *Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire*. But in 1936 these two organisations came together, and in the next few months the affiliated membership rose from about a million and a half to about five millions. French Trade Unionism leapt suddenly to a position of remarkable strength and enthusiasm. Great strikes, in the course of which the strikers occupied the factories and even the great Paris department stores, secured important concessions in the recognition of the rights of collective bargaining, wage advances and safeguards against arbitrary dismissals, and, in a number of the leading industries, the forty-hour working week. In proportion to the industrial population, the French Trade Union movement became suddenly one of the strongest in the world.

Equally startling developments occurred in the United States. The long-established American Federation of Labor has always been primarily a league of craft Unions, organising mainly skilled workers and paying little attention to the needs of the less skilled. It included in 1936 certain industrial Unions—the powerful United Mine Workers and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. But it had never made any impression on the great mass-producing

industries—automobiles, steel, rubber, oil—which were dominated by ‘company Unions’ created by the big employers for the purpose of preventing independent working-class organisation. The refusal of the A.F. of L. to modify its craft Union policy, or to permit any attempt at organising the workers in these industries on comprehensive lines, led to a revolt of the more progressive Unions, headed by John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers. The progressives formed a new body—the Committee for Industrial Organisation—and set out to create industrial Unions for the unorganised industries in defiance of the leaders of the A.F. of L.

The A.F. of L. retaliated first by suspending, and then by expelling, the Unions which supported the C.I.O.—about one-third of its total membership. The C.I.O., however, went on with its campaign and achieved a really remarkable success. In one great enterprise after another ‘company unionism’ crumbled away, and the workers came over in thousands to the new Unions connected with the C.I.O. The Roosevelt Administration aided this process by a law declaring company unionism illegal, and prohibiting employers from preventing their employees from joining the Union of their choice. There were big strikes in the steel, automobile, rubber and other industries, including in some cases the occupation of the factories by the strikers; and a number of big firms which had been among the most determined antagonists of Trade Unionism were compelled to recognise and negotiate with the C.I.O. Unions. Considerable wage advances were secured; and American Trade Unionism entered on a period of swift and vigorous growth in marked contrast to its previous inactivity outside a quite small group of trades. Trade Union membership in the United States probably doubled between 1936 and the beginning of 1938.

It was, however, clear that in both France and the United States the big employers were waiting for a chance to hit back. The sudden growth and new activity of Trade

Unionism had taken them, in both cases, quite by surprise, and compelled them to make concessions—especially as in both countries the Government was favourable to the Trade Union claims. But, though they were forced to yield for the moment, they were by no means reconciled to acceptance of the new status of the workers. The greatly increased strength of French and American Trade Unionism has still to stand the test of an employers' counter-offensive, which will be launched at the first favourable opportunity, and may have been launched before these words appear in print.

Internationally, the Trade Union movement is represented mainly by two bodies—the International Federation of Trade Unions, with its headquarters at Amsterdam, and the Red International of Labour Unions, organised from Moscow. The R.I.L.U., which is of course a Communist body, has no large affiliated groups outside the Soviet Union, now that the French C.G.T.U. has been amalgamated with the C.G.T. It is supported by minority groups in a number of countries; but it is in the main a propagandist body, rather than a federation of national Trade Union movements. The I.F.T.U., to which the British Trades Union Congress is affiliated, represents the majority of Trade Unionists in most of the parliamentary countries. To it belong the Trade Union centres of France, Belgium, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Poland, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Argentina, Canada, Mexico, and, since 1937, the United States (A.F. of L.), in addition to smaller bodies. There have been various attempts to amalgamate the I.F.T.U. and the R.I.L.U. into a single Trade Union International; but in view of the anti-Communist attitude of the Labour and Socialist Parties with which most of the I.F.T.U. bodies are in close association, and of the numerical preponderance of Trade Unionism in the Soviet Union, these efforts have not so far produced any result.

There is, indeed, a marked difference of attitude between the I.F.T.U. and the R.I.L.U., corresponding to the

difference of international attitude between the Communists and the various Labour and Social Democratic Parties. The I.F.T.U., like the political Labour and Socialist International, is a loose federation of independent national movements, each of which claims the right to determine its own policy in accordance with national conditions, subject only to the broad and undefined claims of an international working-class solidarity of which each is its own interpreter. The I.F.T.U. at its Conferences, and through its Bureau representing the various countries, issues pronouncements upon international policy and seeks to prescribe a common line of action for the national movements. But each national body remains free, in practice, to determine its own policy and method of action: there is no presumption that any national movement will be prepared to take its orders from the I.F.T.U.

The R.I.L.U., on the other hand, is in theory an international movement, of which the national movements are only subordinate sections. On the Marxian principle of international class solidarity, it is for the workers of the world as a whole to lay down a common policy, which it is the duty of the national sections to carry into effect. Even if there were no other obstacles in the way of unity, this contrast of attitudes would make the fusion of the two Internationals a difficult matter—though the leaders in the Soviet Union, in pursuance of their desire for an international working-class common front against Fascism, would be prepared to go a long way in order to achieve unity. How deeply they desire this they have shown by their consent to the merging of the French C.G.T.U. with the C.G.T., and by the stand which they have taken, in a number of countries, against the building up of separate Communist Trade Unions in opposition to the Unions affiliated to the I.F.T.U.

In addition to the two Trade Union Internationals (and to certain less important Internationals representing other tendencies), there exist, for most important industries, International Trade Secretariats, or Federations formed

by the Unions in particular industries or occupations. In 1936 there were 27 international bodies of this type connected with the I.F.T.U., ranging in importance from the International Transport Workers' Federation, with 1,730,000 members, and the Miners' International Federation, with over a million, to the Glassworkers, with 20,000, and the Hairdressers, with no more than 7,000.

These 'Trade Secretariats', which work in close connection with the I.F.T.U., are mainly concerned with the co-ordination of Trade Union policy in different countries in industries in which international competition is an important factor, and with the pressing, especially through the International Labour Organisation, of common claims for protective legislation. They also attempt to prevent international blacklegging in trade disputes, and, like the I.F.T.U. itself, perform important functions in organising the exchange of information between the Trade Unions in the various countries. The International Transport Workers' Federation, concerned as it is with the most essentially international of all industries—shipping—has naturally been the most active and determined of these bodies. Under its energetic secretary, Edo Fimmen, of Holland, it has surpassed all other 'Trade Internationals' in cosmopolitan solidarity; and it has taken a specially active part in urging the international regulation of seamen's conditions through the I.L.O.

In most industries it is in practice exceedingly difficult to secure united international action. Each national section has its own agreements with employers, due to expire at different dates and embodying conditions which vary according to national customs, laws, and methods of collective bargaining. The employers, desiring to prevent any growth of international solidarity, will put all the obstacles they can in the way of united international action. When one national section is ready to act, another will usually find itself tied up by an agreement which has still some time to run. Nor do the opportunities for

action, which depend on political as well as economic considerations, usually coincide in the different countries. At present, the chief actual utility of the International Trade Secretariats is in the exchange of information, the prevention of blacklegging, and the preparation of claims for presentation to the I.L.O.

It is, however, of the greatest importance that the Trade Unions should come together internationally, not only in the I.F.T.U.—which brings together the national leaders in the various countries for a general consultation—but also in the Trade Secretariats, which bring the notion of international solidarity nearer to the individual Unions in particular trades. In such movements as the agitation for the forty-hour week both forms of international collaboration are indispensable; for the method of applying the shorter working week needs to be worked out in relation to the peculiar conditions of each separate industry.

International Trade Unionism is of vital importance. But it is still weak in practice, because each national movement finds itself impelled to adjust its methods and policies to national conditions and opportunities, and unable to transcend the predominantly national consciousness of the bulk of its members—and leaders. If, in spite of all these difficulties, international unity of organisation could be secured, the gain would be great; for Trade Unions are the basic organs of the working class in all countries where freedom of association exists, and economic solidarity would do much to further the international political unity of the workers of the world.

PART IV

TRADE UNIONISM IN PARTICULAR

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

THE BRITISH TRADE UNION movement has, in 1938, approximately $5\frac{1}{2}$ million members, of whom about $4\frac{1}{4}$ millions are affiliated to the Trades Union Congress. These totals compare with an occupied population, in Great Britain, of about $21\frac{1}{2}$ millions, or of $19\frac{1}{2}$ millions excluding persons under 18 years of age. But the occupied population includes employers and managers and persons working on their own account, from doctors and lawyers to small traders and hawkers and jobbing gardeners. If we exclude all these and confine our attention to persons working for wages or small salaries, we get an employed population over 18 years of age of about 17 millions. Even this reduced figure seems very great in relation to the number of Trade Unionists; but it has to be remembered that there are certain very large classes of employed persons whom Trade Unionism has touched either not at all, or only to a negligible extent. The largest of these wholly unorganised groups consists of domestic servants, of whom there were well over $1\frac{3}{4}$ millions at the Census of 1931. This total includes domestic workers in institutions as well as in private households; and a few of the former are no doubt enrolled in Trade Unions. But we may say broadly that this entire group is without any sort of Trade Unionism; for though attempts have been made from time to time to create Unions for hotel and restaurant workers and even for private domestic servants, these have met with no lasting success. The Trades Union Congress is making, in 1938, a renewed attempt to create a

domestic workers' Union; but the results cannot at present be predicted.

A second very large body of unorganised workers is to be found among the clerks and typists, who numbered $1\frac{1}{2}$ millions at the Census of 1931. The Railway Clerks' Association is a well-organised Trade Union, affiliated to the T.U.C. and accustomed to work in collaboration with the other railway Unions; and the various clerical grades in the Post Office and other Civil Service departments are also strongly organised, though since the Act of 1927 they have been forced to sever their formal connection with the T.U.C. The Trade Unions organising distributive workers include a fair proportion of clerical workers connected with wholesale and retail trade, especially in the Co-operative movement; and some of the insurance clerks are organised with other insurance workers in Unions affiliated to the T.U.C. The general workers' Unions also include a sprinkling of clerks, and so do the Unions in the printing and a few other industries.

A peculiar situation exists at present in the Local Government service. The largest organisation, the National Association of Local Government Officers, has a membership of about 100,000 ranging from town clerks and other highly-paid officials to ordinary clerical employees; but, though it acts as a protective body in defence of its members' interests, it has not usually been regarded as a Trade Union, but rather as a professional association with mainly technical and educational objects. Of late, however, it has approximated more nearly to Trade Union methods, without being ready to affiliate to the Trades Union Congress; and there has been active controversy concerning the attitude which the Trade Union movement ought to adopt towards it. Its principal rival among local government workers is the National Union of Public Employees which, beginning as an organisation of manual workers, has expanded to include the non-manual grades, and has much more than doubled its membership during the past three years—from under 15,000 in 1934 to over

40,000 at the end of 1937. Against the votes of the N.U.P.E. and certain other Unions the Trades Union Congress decided in 1937 to collaborate with N.A.L.G.O. in joint efforts to improve the conditions of the workers in municipal employment. This decision fits in with the recent trend of T.U.C. policy, and with the keen desire of the T.U.C. leaders to establish friendly relations with the professional workers, even where they are not organised along strict Trade Union lines.

The bank clerks have organisations of a somewhat similar character to N.A.L.G.O.—the Bank Officers' Guild in England, and the more militant Scottish Bankers' Association north of the Border. For both these groups, however, the position is complicated by the refusal of 'recognition' by the banks, which endeavour to organise their employees in 'company Unions' and are prompt to victimise bank clerks guilty of any open Trade Union activity. Fear of victimisation, as well as snobbery and a desire to avoid politics, keeps the bank employees outside the working-class movement, and prevents them from affiliating to the T.U.C.

But the general mass of commercial and industrial clerks and typists is not organised at all. The National Union of Clerks, the chief body catering for them, had in 1937 only about 10,000 members; and these are largely found in Trade Union or Friendly Society offices, or in one or two industries in which the manual workers' Unions have helped in the work of organisation.

Yet another great gap in the Trade Union movement is in agriculture. The National Union of Agricultural Workers had in 1937 only about 32,000 members, out of a total of three-quarters of a million agricultural labourers in England and Wales. The Transport and General Workers' Union, which has now absorbed the Scottish Farm Servants' Union, had a few thousands more; but the main mass of agricultural workers has never been effectively organised.

Fourthly, Trade Union organisation is in general much weaker among women than among men. The women

workers in the boot and shoe industry, the cotton industry, and to a less extent the other textile trades, are relatively well organised; and there is a substantial female membership in the tailoring and printing and paper industries. But in the minor metal trades and in the miscellaneous manufacturing industries which have of late employed women in rapidly growing numbers, Trade Unionism is either non-existent or, where it exists, has enrolled only a very small proportion of the women workers. There are in all approximately $5\frac{1}{2}$ million female wage- and salary-earners; but in 1938 the total number of women in Trade Unions was still well under a million. Moreover, this latter figure includes the teachers, who are well organised in associations of a semi-Trade Union type, but have hitherto refused to connect themselves with either the Labour Party or the Trades Union Congress.

Fifthly, organisation is still weak among distributive workers, except in the Co-operative movement. There are over two million distributive workers insured under the Unemployment Insurance Acts; but the two distributive workers' Unions had in 1937 only about 220,000 members between them; and this figure includes a number of clerical workers and also of factory and other workers employed by the Co-operative movement. There has been, however, a remarkable growth of organisation among shop assistants during the last two or three years.

Sixthly, Trade Unionism is generally weak among unskilled and casual workers. The two big general labour Unions, the National Union of General and Municipal Workers and the Transport and General Workers' Union, had between them in 1937 over 860,000 members; but a very large proportion of these are in the transport and municipal services, or are in fact semi-skilled workers regularly attached to a definite industry or trade. The floating mass of really unskilled labour is exceedingly difficult to organise, even in times of boom.

As against these outstanding weaknesses the Trade Union movement has certain areas of strength. Organisation is

at its strongest in the coal mines and steel works, on the railways, in the printing, cotton, and boot and shoe trades, and in the skilled sections of the metal and building trades. The miners, cotton operatives, and shipbuilding workers have been remarkably successful in maintaining their Trade Unions in face of prolonged depression and a steady shrinkage in the total numbers employed. The railway workers are highly organised in the clerical as well as the manual grades. The steel workers have maintained their strength in face of very rapid mechanisation, which has rapidly reduced the volume of employment. The printing workers are practically blackleg-proof in the London newspaper trades, and strongly organised in most sections throughout the country.

The engineering and building trades stand in a somewhat different position, because of the sharp cleavage in them between skilled workers who have learnt their crafts by some sort of apprenticeship and less skilled workers. The skilled groups of building and wood-working craftsmen—masons, bricklayers, plasterers, plumbers, carpenters and the rest—are for the most part fairly well organised; but among the builders' labourers Trade Unionism is very weak. In engineering, the fully skilled craftsmen—fitters, turners, smiths, moulders, patternmakers, etc.—are largely Trade Unionists; but the great and rapidly growing masses of semi-skilled machine-operators are far less strongly organised, and are moreover divided up, where they are organised at all, between such of the craft Unions as have opened their ranks to admit them and the general labour Unions. In certain importantⁿ sections, notably the big motor-manufacturing firms, organisation is almost non-existent except among fully skilled workers; and the employers are in certain cases still able to refuse any sort of recognition of the rights of collective bargaining.

The central body which sets out to represent the Trade Union movement as a whole is the Trades Union Congress, with roughly 220 Trade Unions and 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ million members affiliated to it. The Congress, which meets annually in

September, elects an executive called the General Council, consisting of 31 members. For the purposes of this election the affiliated Trade Unions are divided into 17 groups, each represented by one or more members on the General Council, which further includes two members specially chosen to represent women Trade Unionists. A survey of these 17 groups serves broadly to indicate the character and strength of the Trade Union movement, though it will be necessary to add some reference to important organised groups which are not connected with the T.U.C.

TRADES UNION CONGRESS GROUPING, 1937

<i>Group</i>	<i>Number of Societies</i>	<i>Affiliated membership in thousands</i>
1. Mining and Quarrying	8	545
2. Railways	3	449
3. Other Transport	9	606
4. Shipbuilding	4	78
5. Engineering, etc.	27	449
6. Iron and Steel and Minor Metal Trades	19	119
7. Building, Woodworking and Furnishing	18	327
8. Printing and Paper	13	169
9. Cotton	49	185
10. Other Textiles	14	105
11. Clothing	8	92
12. Boots and Leather	6	102
13. Distributive and Miscellaneous Trades	18	275
14. Agriculture	1	32
15. Public Employees	5	60
16. Non-Manual Workers	7	74
17. General Workers	3	342
Total	214	4,009

THE MINERS

THE MINEWORKERS' FEDERATION of Great Britain, which has been in existence since 1888, is in the main a close federation of a number of district Unions, each confined to a particular coalfield. The largest of these district Unions are in South Wales, Yorkshire, Durham and Scotland. Each district Union has its own full-time officers, its own executive and district conference, and its own complete independence in dealing with local affairs. Each Union has also its own scales of contributions and benefits, and its own funds, out of which all benefits are paid; for the M.F.G.B. simply levies on the district Unions enough to meet the central administrative expenses. There is no financial unification, though a scheme has recently been approved in principle for amalgamating all the district associations into a single Union.

Since 1921 the colliery owners have refused to recognise the M.F.G.B. as a negotiating body, and have made agreements only with the separate district Unions, on terms varying from one coalfield to another. The M.F.G.B. demands national recognition and the right to bargain nationally with the owners, as it actually did bargain up to 1921, while the mines were under Government control. But in face of the refusal of the Mining Association to do this, the miners have been compelled to present their national demands to the Government, which has acted as an intermediary in discussing them with the owners. Even when matters of principle have been thus indirectly discussed on a national basis, the owners have insisted on the embodiment of the terms of settlement in separate

district agreements. This is an important issue, because the miners demand both a national minimum wage and a system of uniform percentage changes in wages over the whole country, to be secured, if necessary, by some pooling of receipts between the different coalfields. The owners will have none of this; and it could, in fact, be achieved only by some form of State control, if not by outright nationalisation of the mines.

Mining is a dangerous trade, carried on largely in isolation from other industries. Most of the miners live in colliery villages where there is little other employment. Both the danger and the isolation tend to create a strong sense of solidarity. The natural unit of organisation among miners is the pit lodge, consisting of workers in a single mine, though sometimes several mines are organised together in one lodge. The pit lodge, consisting of men who both work and live close together, makes a remarkably democratic unit of organisation; and it is far easier for the miners than for most bodies of workers to secure fully representative meetings for discussion and voting. The lodges in turn send representatives to a county or district conference, which is the governing authority for the district and gives its instructions to the district executive and officials. The county or district association in turn sends delegates to the national conference of the M.F.G.B., usually with definite instructions upon the principal matters that are to be discussed. Delegation, on the basis of instructions emanating from the pit group, plays a large part in the working of the miners' Unions, and makes their leading officers and committees a good deal less independent of rank-and-file opinion than the leaders of other Unions are apt to be. This has its bad as well as its good side; for it has often prevented the representatives, even at a National Conference, from calling off a strike when they knew, but the rank and file did not, that nothing could be gained by prolonging the struggle. But, as against this, it does keep the miners' movement fundamentally more democratic in its working than Unions in which the

leaders are in less close and constant contact with the rank and file.

At each pit of any size, the miners usually elect a special officer, called a 'checkweighman', whose principal duty is to check the weight of coal brought to the surface with the employers' weighman, in order to secure that each man is credited with his proper earnings. But the checkweighman, who is paid by the miners themselves and is safeguarded by law from dismissal by the management, often acts in addition as a sort of Trade Union official on the spot, ready to take up any grievance with the managers; and a good checkweighman can do a great deal to make Trade Union organisation in his colliery strong and effective. Most bodies of workers have no one at all analogous to the checkweighman actually at their place of employment to represent their claims. The miners had to fight hard to secure the right to appoint checkweighmen, which they first won in 1860, though adequate safeguards were not secured for another twenty years. This privilege has helped very materially towards building up the strength of the miners' movement.

The miners' Unions include both underground and surface workers; but their main strength is among the coal hewers, who are recruited without any formal apprenticeship from the younger workers entering the pits. There is no sharp class division between skilled and less skilled workers, such as exists in the craft trades; and this helps to consolidate the miners' movement on inclusive lines. There are, indeed, craftsmen employed in the pits, such as colliery mechanics and winding enginemen, and these are sometimes organised in the miners' Unions and sometimes in craft Unions either confined to mineworkers or covering other industries as well. But the craftsmen are not very numerous; and in effect the M.F.G.B. is an 'industrial union', able to speak for the rank-and-file mineworkers as a whole. Colliery deputies and firemen, subordinate officials who have special responsibilities for safety in the pits and must hold State certificates of

competence, are sometimes members of the miners' Unions, and sometimes have separate societies. The higher officials have their own professional associations; but these are not Trade Unions, and have no connection with the M.F.G.B.

Of late years work in the mines has been changing very fast as a result of the growing use of electricity for coal cutting as well as haulage. Older miners after a long spell of unemployment find themselves called upon to master what is in effect a quite new trade. Many of them cannot stand the pace, or adapt themselves to the new technique, which is altering the mental attitude of the younger men, and turning them into machine operators instead of wielders of the pick and crowbar. There has been intense speeding-up in many pits, involving great nervous strain. The new generation of mineworkers is different from the old; and the change will reflect itself in the character of mining Trade Unionism. But the danger and the isolation remain; and these above all else have given the miners' movement its characteristic qualities of solidarity and determination.

THE MINERS' UNIONS

by

NESS EDWARDS

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THE RISE OF industrial capitalism in Britain, with all its crises and difficulties, is reflected, with an exaggerated effect, in the growth of the miners' Trade Union movement. In its origins, in its fight against feudal political restrictions for its own life, it made the miners fight for the life of their own Union. In a century of ploughing its bloody way to a completely efficient mechanised economy, coal mining in Britain has shown all the naked and crude effects of the march of production that are involved in capitalist development.

The progress of the mining industry has naturally been the progress of capitalist society. The decline of one essentially indicates the decline of the other, although the basic interdependence may not be as close on account of the later development of alternative power forms.

Prior to the beginning of the nineteenth century, coal was mined on a small scale in various parts of the country. The man-power for many of the early ventures was obtained from the convict prisons and workhouses. The pariah was bound to mining; for generations afterwards the miner was regarded as a pariah.

The development of factory production, based on steam, and the application of steam to all forms of locomotion, gave a new stimulus to the development of mining. Iron, the new skeleton of rising capitalist society, depended entirely upon

the development of coal. The town life associated with the growth of capitalism increased the domestic demand beyond the dreams of the early adventurers. By the middle of the nineteenth century the mining industry had increased by leaps and bounds. Hordes of workers, uprooted peasants in the main, were driven, by economic necessity, to find employment. The face of Britain changed. The black smudges of South Wales, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Northumberland, Durham, etc., appeared on the economic map. To borrow a phrase, "mining was reaching to Man's estate".

The establishment of the mining industry in Britain was associated with a brutality and disregard for human life usually associated with the slavery of the nineteenth century Congo. Men, women, and children of both sexes were employed underground for as much as twelve hours per day, Sundays included. Company shops (the old truck system) tied the worker to the employer. Company houses helped to fasten the tie. In the 1840's, six years appeared to be the normal age at which a child would start work in the mines, and at a wage of 4*d.* to 6*d.* per day. Women earned as much as 1*s.* per day. Men averaged from 10*s.* to 15*s.* per week.

Explosions were regarded as the normal and inevitable consequence of mining. The fiery gases were actually set alight to get rid of them.

Hidden away from the public eye, carried on below the ground, in darkness, the mining industry is peculiarly fitted for the perpetration of man's inhumanity to man. The grievances were hidden; the non-miners could only see the protest. Many revolts arose out of these ghastly conditions. The miners of Britain earned a notoriety for their startling mass movements of protest. The causes of these movements, fortunately for the coal-owners, were hidden away below ground. These movements were, in the main, local protests directed against the local coal-owners. The early 'Scotch Cattle' terrorist movement of 1830-40 had no permanent basis. In the Chartist move-

ment, particularly in South Wales, the miners played an outstanding part. The Welsh coal-owners led the cavalry throughout South Wales to suppress both movements. In 1841 the Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland was formed at Wakefield, under the leadership of Martin Jude, and every coal-pit in the country was visited by its organisers to form 'Union Clubs'. For the most part, the organisation was stamped out by the employers, except for the four counties of Northumberland, Durham, Lancashire and Yorkshire. Within a few years Lancashire succeeded in forming its own county Union.

In 1858, Alexander Macdonald attempted to re-form a national organisation by calling a delegate conference at Ashton-under-Lync. This was sparsely attended, and it was not until the Leeds conference of 1863 that Macdonald was able to form the National Association of Miners.

Dissatisfied with the lack of evangelical vigour in the National Association, Lancashire and Cheshire, under the leadership of Thomas Halliday, in 1869, started the Amalgamated Association of Miners. Its origin co-incided with the depression which lasted through the late '60s. Reductions in wages were being enforced in nearly all the coalfields, and under the leadership of Halliday attempts at resistance were general. By 1871 the depression had passed and successful attempts to raise wages were widespread. In these movements the Amalgamated Association not only led the strikes, but financed them as well. In the slump which commenced in 1874 widespread attempts to resist wage reductions weakened and finally overwhelmed the Amalgamated Association.[^]

In the later '70s, a revival in trade brought changes in the tactics of the coalowners. In a number of the coalfields they introduced a system of determining wages by a 'sliding scale'. The wages of the miners were to be determined by the ascertained selling prices of coal. In other coalfields 'Joint Boards of Conciliation' were set going, and each coalfield set about looking after its own interests to the exclusion of the general interest.

The conflict between those following the 'Sliding Scale System' and those following the 'Conciliation Board System' was affected by the bad results accruing to those favouring the Sliding Scale by the fall in prices. This conflict expressed itself, particularly in the 'eighties, by the termination of the Sliding Scale agreement by the County Unions in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire. In 1888 the movement resulted in the formation of a Miners' Federation of Great Britain, based on an anti-Sliding Scale policy.

Throughout each coalfield not in the M.F.G.B. now commenced a long-drawn-out campaign for the inclusion of all the coalfields in one national miners' federation. By the end of the century, with the exception of Northumberland and Durham, all the county Unions were federated in the M.F.G.B. It was not until 1908 that complete federation was obtained, with an affiliated membership of 600,000.

The political and industrial importance of this huge machine in the life of the British working class would be difficult to over-estimate. Largely as a result of this machine there have been added to the 'Laws of the Land', in addition to the Coal Mines Act, 1887, (authorising the appointment and payment of a checkweigher); the Eight Hours Act, 1908, amended to a Seven Hours Act, in 1919 and to a Seven and a Half Hours Act in 1926; the Minimum Wage Act, 1912; and the Coal Mines Act and Regulations, 1911 (authorising the appointment of workmen to examine the mines).

The effect of the famous Sankey Commission of 1919 and the Triple Alliance movement, leading ultimately to the General Strike of 1926, in quickening working-class thought, cannot be calculated.

As one miner in every five is incapacitated by injury each year, the need of Workmen's Compensation has always been a burning question. Compensation law agitations have invariably been sponsored by the miners' Unions. The regulation of mining conditions, because of

its innate dangers, has had to be determined by legislation. Because of the nature of his employment, the miner has had to be a political being; his organisation has had to pay the greatest attention to political representation.

The basis of this huge mass organisation lies in the colliery Lodge. In all the county organisations this basis is a common one. In the Lodge are organised all the miners engaged at a single colliery. The Lodge has its Lodge Chairman and Lodge Secretary, appointed either by ballot or by show of hands in well-attended Annual Meetings. Around these two officials revolves the whole of the activities of the Lodge in relation to the colliery management. In those collieries in which mechanisation has not sufficiently progressed the checkweighman is still the important representative; he, very often, being either the Lodge Secretary or Chairman. These officials are invariably the instrument of the Lodge. They sit in the seats of authority at the Lodge meetings, they lead all the deputations to the Colliery Manager, they advise on all questions of Unemployment Benefit and Assistance, they sign or counter-sign all those forms which arise out of Unemployment, they deal with minimum and other wage disputes, they handle the straightforward compensation cases (each year one out of every five miners is affected by compensation). For advice of all sorts relating to the work of the miner and all other non-employment matters the Lodge Chairman and Secretary are the only folks ready and willing to serve. The collection of the members' contributions and its total or partial remission to the Central Fund, is the work of the Lodge.

There in the narrow valleys, in the comparatively isolated mining communities, are spun those ties which bind the miners to their organisation to which they give almost a blind unquestioning loyalty. The Federation Lodge and its officers protect the miner both in his work and during his leisure. Invariably, each such colliery village has its Miners' Institute which caters for the Lodge activities and the recreational side of the miner's life.

Because the community is mainly composed of miners and their wives, the political movement is a miners' movement. The Member of Parliament is a Miners' Member of Parliament. No 'Red Letter' tactics can shake the loyalty of the miners to their old Lodge Secretary who has become a Member of Parliament.

Added to this solid phalanx is the local Co-operative Store. This too is invariably controlled by the Lodge Officers and the Committee-men.

Away in the mining villages is knit the basic units of the miners' Trade Union on a loyalty that rests upon service regarding all the problems of a miner's life. Over a group of such units, from about ten to thirty collieries, there is appointed, again by ballot, the Miners' Agent. Invariably he has served his apprenticeship for such a position for a long period as Checkweigher, or Lodge Secretary, or Chairman. To him is relegated all the matters in which the Lodges have failed to obtain satisfaction. He is the bigger hammer that is brought into action when the Lodge Officers have failed. His is an executive position. He speaks not only for his own 'district', but for the coalfield. He, however, regards the membership of his own 'district' with all the failings and feelings of a petty tribal chief. He feels more responsible to his own 'district' than he does to the coalfield executive. Under his direction price lists are made, and disputed compensation cases fought. He represents the members at Courts of Referees and Unemployment Assistance Offices. Victimisation and general disputes within his group of collieries are matters for his attention. These 'districts' function together in a coalfield or county organisation. From each sub-district is elected a member to serve on the coalfield or Union Executive Council. In some of the coalfields this member is a Miners' Agent and in others a rank-and-file member, and is usually appointed by ballot.

The function of the Union Executive is to meet the Coalfield Coalowners' Association. Under the terms of the National Agreement of 1921, the wages of the miners

of each coalfield were to be determined by the ascertainment of each coalfield. In other words, the National Agreement merely provided a formula for the settlement of wages on a coalfield or non-national basis. The National Agreement confined the business of each county or coalfield Union to its own coalfield. The main function of each coalfield organisation is to determine the general agreement under which the miners in that coalfield are employed. For each coalfield there is a Conciliation Board consisting of representatives of the miners and the owners, which negotiates the Conciliation Board Agreement for the coalfield. All the miners are employed under the terms of this Agreement, and it forms the terms of contract for each individual miner. There is also provision for a Joint Disputes Committee which deals with all disputes arising out of the Agreement. The Union Executive thus represents all the men engaged in a particular coalfield. It centralises the major part of the finance of the organisation, receiving the major portion of the contributions collected by Lodges. It is also the supreme authority of the coalfield organisation, and between conferences of Lodge Delegates applies the rules and administers the affairs of the Union. It authorises all legal actions in defence of members, and meets the costs of such actions and all the salaries of its full-time officials (including Miners' Agents) from the Central Funds. The contributions and benefits of the miners' Trade Unions are set out overleaf, its chief characteristic being a complete lack of uniformity.

The Miners' Federation of Great Britain (since 1932 the Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain) is merely a loose Federation of some seventeen coalfield organisations. It has no organisational control over the domestic affairs of its affiliated units. It depends for its finance upon annual affiliation fees paid by the affiliated miners' Unions, supplemented by certain permitted levies upon the Unions. It consists of an Executive Council elected by ballot of the respective coalfield Unions biennially. It has an office in London, and from 1926 up to about 1935 was

CONTRIBUTIONS AND BENEFITS OF THE DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

	Weekly Contri- butions	s.	d.	Retained by Lodge	Death Benefits	Strike Pay	Unem- ployment Pay	Victim- isation Pay	Removal- Allow- ances	Pension
Bristol	1	0		Nil	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Derbyshire	1	0		Expenses only	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Durham	9			1½d.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Lancashire	6			2½d.	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Leicester	6			Nil	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Northumberland	6			1½d.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Nottingham	6			Nil	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Scotland	6			¾	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Somerset	6			Expenses only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
South Derby	6			Nil	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
South Wales	6			1½d.	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Yorkshire	1	0		Nil	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Corkmen	9			¾	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Yorks Enginemen	1	0		Expenses only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Yorks Winding Enginemen	1	3		Expenses only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Northumberland Mechanics	6			1d.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Durham Mechanics	1	0		1½d.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Power Group	6½			Expenses only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

mainly a correspondence clearing house for the coalfield Unions. It deals with questions of a national character, such as Hours of Labour, National Wages Formula, Workmen's Compensation Appeal Cases, which it finances, Legislation, International Mining Relations, and Collection of Mining Statistics. It holds National Conferences at which national policy is determined. It attempts, seldom successfully, to co-ordinate the policies of the constituent Unions. Its most successful attempt was its national campaign of 1935-6 to obtain a 2s. per day flat rate increase for all the miners throughout the country. This, briefly, is a short description of the Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain, which covers an affiliated membership of over 90 per cent of the Trade Unionists employed in the mining industry. Its affiliated membership is much more than half a million.

There exist, side by side with the Federation, small organisations of special types of workers. The Firemen's, Examiners' and Deputies' Organisation has a membership of about 10,000 and is confined almost entirely to men who are regarded as colliery officials. It is affiliated to the T.U.C. but not to the Mineworkers' Federation. The Winding Men's Associations, spread over the coalfields in three separate Unions, having a membership of some 6,000, consists of the key men who are in charge of the winding of the men and material from the shafts. It is affiliated to the T.U.C. only. The Enginemen's and Craftsmen's Association is a smaller organisation which is stronger in some coalfields than others. In some coalfields it is affiliated to the County Federation; in others it is looked upon as blackleg organisation. Added to this is some alleged poaching of members by the E.T.U., A.E.U. and General Workers' Union.

The T.U.C. has, unfortunately, not assisted in making the industry a close preserve for one Union. Craft interests, heavily represented in the T.U.C., may account for this policy.

From 1926 up to recent months, the main problem of the Federation was that of the company Union menace.

For all practical purposes the problem has now been solved. The task of uniting the county Unions into a real national Trade Union is still being fitfully tackled. A railwayman, for instance, whether he lives in Wales or Scotland, thinks of himself as a railwayman. The miner is either a Welsh miner or a Scotch miner, etc.

How ridiculous is the call of the miners for a nationalised industry, whilst still maintaining a coalfield basis for their own organisation, is apparent at even a cursory glance. A real live national organisation, speaking with authority for all the men engaged in the industry, is an essential basis if the miners are to play as important a part in the future as in the past.

The problems of the mining industry are, and will be, the essential and basic problems of capitalist society. These will be many in number, and more severe probably than their expression in non-basic industries. Conflict in immediate interests will arise between the coalfields catering for the export trade as compared with those catering for the protected inland market.

Despite these immediate differences, there is a growing will to weld the mining Trade Unions into a cohesive national force, ready and determined to hold what they have, and to move to the attack to win for the 'slaves of the lamp' a brighter place in the social life of the nation.¹

¹ Since this article was written it has become known that the M F G.B. is tabling at its next Annual Conference a complete scheme for the unifying of the County Unions into a real national Trade Union. In South Wales steps are also being taken to merge some of the craft organisations.

THE RAILWAYMEN

THE RAILWAY WORKERS, at the opposite pole from the miners, are scattered over the entire country in relatively small groups, and live intermingled with other types of workers in towns and villages of every sort and size. There are a few railway towns, such as Swindon and Derby; but these are centres for the construction and repair of rolling stock, and the workers in these railway shops are divided between the N.U.R. and a host of craft Unions in the engineering and woodworking trades. Locomotive men are somewhat more concentrated than the other traffic grades, round centres where there are running sheds; but even they are fairly widely diffused. On the other hand, the number of separate employers is small; and since 1919 conditions of service have been settled for the traffic grades on all the railways in one collective bargain between the railway companies and the three railway Unions. There is separate bargaining for the shopmen; but in their case also there is a single bargain covering all the railway companies.

The effect of these conditions is that railway Trade Unionism is highly centralised. National bargaining is the rule; and there are no district bodies corresponding to the district units of the Mineworkers' Federation. There are indeed, in each Union, District Councils; but these exist only for organising and propagandist purposes, and have no negotiating functions and no control over strikes. In matters of policy there is nothing between the purely local branch, made up of workers in a particular town or village or, in large centres, a particular station

or depot, and the national authority, which is made up of a conference of delegates elected by grouped branches and a smaller executive committee elected in the same way, but by larger constituencies.

The miners, when they have to settle an important issue, commonly resort to a ballot vote of all the members. The railwaymen, on the other hand, settle everything by means of delegate conferences, except when the executive is given power to act on its own responsibility. This means that the full-time officials have much more influence than among the miners, since it is easier to convince a small conference than the whole body of members, and, as the delegates largely represent groups of branches, there is no organised body of constituents to give them instructions or call them to book. The miners' delegates at National Conferences are really delegates, pledged to vote according to their constituents' wishes; the railwaymen's delegates are representatives, entitled to take their own line.

Apart from the shopmen, the railway workers are organised in three Unions—the National Union of Railwaymen, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, and the Railway Clerks' Association. The R.C.A. organises not only clerks but also many workers in the supervisory grades, including station-masters except at the very largest stations. The A.S.L.E.F. includes the majority of the engine-drivers, firemen and cleaners—the 'footplate grades'—who have special problems of their own, such as the necessity to pass an eyesight test. The N.U.R. aims nominally at including all railway workers—that indeed was the object with which it was founded in 1913; but in practice it does not attempt to organise clerks or supervisors promoted from the clerical grades, and it has largely lost its hold over the 'footplate' men, who were at one time fairly evenly divided between it and the rival Union. In general, the three Unions work together, though there have been on occasion serious differences between the N.U.R. and the A.S.L.E.F.

The railway shopmen present a special problem. They include skilled engineers, boilermakers, vehicle-builders, upholsterers, and men from many other trades, who may work now in a railway shop and now in some quite different type of establishment. But the railway shopmen include also many semi-skilled workers, and the dividing line between skilled and less skilled has never been so definite in railway work as in most branches of engineering. It is common for a railway shopman to rise to skilled work without definite apprenticeship. For the most part the highly skilled railway shopmen belong to their various craft Unions; but most of the semi-skilled and some of the skilled workers are in the N.U.R., which has lower scales of contributions. At one time there was continual bickering between the two sections; but of late they have worked with much less friction, committing the general adjustment of wages and conditions to the Industrial Court,¹ which largely follows in its findings the results of collective bargaining between the railway companies and the traffic grades.

Railwaymen include a high proportion of keen Trade Unionists. Their wide dispersal over the country causes them to play a large part in the general work of the Labour movement, especially in the more backward areas. They are active on Trades Councils and Local Labour Parties, and have as a rule a high degree of political consciousness; for, like the miners, they work in an industry whose affairs bring them into continual relations with the State. Railway strikes, like mining strikes, usually lead to Government intervention. But the railwaymen, unlike the miners, are on fairly good terms with their employers, who nowadays make no difficulty about granting full recognition. The railwaymen, like the miners, demand nationalisation; but they contrive to get along without it with much less bickering.

This is largely because railway conditions are under public regulation. Railway fares and charges are compulsorily regulated by the Railway Rates Tribunal; and

¹ See page 107.

under the Railways Act of 1921 statutory machinery was set up for the settlement of wages and conditions. This machinery, which was never mandatory, has since been given up; but the Railway Staff Tribunal set up in 1935 has inherited its prestige, and has so far secured acceptance for its awards.

In comparison with the miners, the railwaymen are newcomers to Trade Unionism. The first railway Union dates only from the 'seventies, and railway organisation did not become powerful till 1906. The companies refused to recognise the Unions until 1919, though the Government recognised them fully while it was in control of the railways during the war. But the railway workers have made up for lost time; they are now among the best organised of all Trade Union groups.

TRADE UNIONISM ON THE RAILWAYS

by

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THE FOUR GREAT Railway Companies of Great Britain together control a capital of more than £1,000 million and employ about 600,000 persons. This large and important section of the community works, for the most part, under Trade Union conditions, and it should be of interest to set down how they have been secured.

Railway Trade Unionism has a continuous history of nearly 70 years, but only within the last 20 years or so has it become a really effective force. Several reasons may be assigned. No doubt the outrageously long hours and the scandalously low wages (mild terms to apply to those nineteenth century conditions—which continued moreover right into the twentieth century), coupled with the very severe discipline, military in character, made the organising of railwaymen extremely hard, even perilous. Many striking examples of victimisation, some of them historic, could be cited.

Then, too, the highly specialised nature of railway employment, and the consequent practical impossibility of getting similar skilled employment in other industries, made the bulk of railwaymen extremely reluctant to run counter to the wishes and instructions of Railway Directors and Officers, and so risk losing their jobs. On the other hand, railway employment, for the most part, however arduous, was permanent in character, and the dread of

unemployment was consequently unknown to railwaymen of 'good character'; that is, to those who did their jobs to the satisfaction of the Management.

Whether or no these causes are sufficient to account for the retarded growth of Trade Unionism on the Railways as compared with other industries, in 1894 there were less than 50,000 railway Trade Unionists. By the end of 1913 there were over 325,000, and today (exclusive of the 'craftsmen' of the engineering and members of the general Unions in the railway shops and sheds) there are 472,500. These are organised in three national unions. First, the National Union of Railwaymen (the N.U.R.) formed in 1913 by the amalgamation of three of the four manual workers' Unions (the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants established 1870, the United Pointmen's and Signalmen's Society, 1880, and the General Railway Workers' Union, 1889), the fourth (the Locomotivemen's Society) preferring to retain its separate identity.

The constitution of the N.U.R. provides for receiving into membership any worker engaged in any capacity as an employee of a railway company. In practice, its membership in the 'Shops' and 'Repairing Sheds' is confined to the less skilled of the workers (it does not cater for the craftsmen); it divides with the Associated Society the locomotive grades, and its active membership of the salaried grades is mostly amongst the supervisory staff promoted from the conciliation grades. Its present-day membership is 360,000.

The membership of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (established 1880) is confined to the locomotive grades—engine drivers, firemen and cleaners—but since 1929 it has agreed to continue in membership such employees promoted to the salaried staff as inspectors, etc. Its membership is now 50,000.

The Railway Clerks' Association (established 1897) caters for all grades of salaried railway employees—clerks, station-masters and agents, controllers, inspectors, foremen (other than working-foremen), draughtsmen, chemists

and other technical staff. It may be said to be the only Trade Union which has successfully organised clerical and administrative workers—supervisors and the supervised—throughout the whole of an industry. Its membership is now 62,500.

With the "All-grades" movement of 1906 a new growth, both in Trade Union numbers and temper, became evident. The growth in membership and particularly in *moral* was accelerated during the Great War, and with this growth the Railway Companies gradually, but with manifest reluctance, conceded Trade Union recognition. This came in limited but practical measure to the N.U.R. and the A.S.L.E. & F. during the war, but was not formally conceded until after the Armistice, whilst R.C.A. recognition was still further delayed. There was, however, no doubt as to the difference in tone and temper of railway Trade Unionists as compared with pre-war days. The Locomotivemen notified the Companies and the Government in November, 1918, that there would be a strike instead of a General Election unless the eight-hour day (promised in 1917) was definitely conceded; the salaried staff took similar action in order to obtain recognition of the R.C.A. in February, 1919, whilst the attempt to thrust the general conciliation grades back to something like their pre-war levels brought about the great national stoppage of September, 1919.

During 1919, the Ministry of Transport was established, the Government abandoned its previously-announced policy of railway nationalisation, espoused the 'Grouping Principle' and in 1920 issued a White Paper setting forth its proposals for amalgamating the Companies into half a dozen State-regulated combines under private ownership.

In the meantime, the three Trade Unions were engaged with the Railway Executive Committee (a committee of General Managers acting under the authority of the President of the Board of Trade) and their assistants, the principal staff officers, in hammering out a series of national agreements standardising rates of pay, hours of duty and

other conditions of service for both salaried and conciliation grades. The N.U.R. and A.S.L.E. & F. were also engaged with the Companies' and the Ministry's representatives in formulating negotiating machinery for future collective bargaining.

Of the 130 odd railways of pre-war days, each had its own rates of pay and conditions of service and as regards some sections of employees, its own designations of the different grades. These rates and conditions varied over extraordinarily wide limits, and the task of reducing them to a standard list of grades with national rates of pay and conditions of service involved many weeks of hard negotiating right through the spring and summer of 1919. An Agreement for the Locomotive grades was signed in early August and this was followed the same month by a series for the salaried staffs. Agreements for the conciliation grades outside the locomotivemen proved even more difficult to negotiate, and, as already mentioned, were eventually secured only after an actual stoppage.

The same year saw also the establishment of National Wages Boards covering the manual workers in the four railway operating departments to supplement Trade Union negotiations, and it is pleasant to record that when in 1922 negotiating machinery to deal with future service conditions was elaborated in accordance with the Provisions of the Railways Act, 1921, the two older Unions whole-heartedly supported the R.C.A.'s. right to be included, the 'black-coated railwaymen' having proved their mettle in their recognition struggle of 1919. Thus, at long last, 50 years after the birth of the oldest continuous Trade Union, collective bargaining was firmly established throughout the railway service.

With certain not unimportant modifications (tending to simplification) in its various stages, and in the constitution of the final Wages Tribunal, the negotiating machinery agreed in 1922 is still in operation.

The machinery includes: (1) Local departmental committees for each department or group of grades at

stations and depots, (2) Sectional councils to deal with subjects affecting a group of grades on each particular railway, and, (3) The national negotiating machinery.¹

The railway industry is highly centralised, and, as has been mentioned, all wages and general service conditions are settled by national negotiations between the companies and the Unions. There are no less than twenty-seven such national agreements (exclusive of those covering the 'Shops'—see below), nineteen of which apply to the wages and eight to the salaried staff. The former agreements, it may be noted, cover not only the old conciliation grades of the four railway departments, but staff employed on the railway-owned motor vehicles and canals and at the railway-owned docks, including the tugboat and dredging staff and 'floating staff' of the small passenger steamers, etc. Similarly, the clerical and supervisory agreements cover not only those staffs throughout the railways, but the docks and 'floating' supervisory staff.

The three Unions supply their thousands of local branch officers with copies of these national agreements and any variation which may be made in them. Consequently, every organised worker learns without difficulty what his working conditions are. Moreover, it is not competent for the management of any company or all the companies to vary these conditions, save by agreement with the Union or Unions concerned.

Any proposal by the Railway Companies, or any one of them, to vary a national agreement must be submitted to the Union or Unions concerned, or, failing agreement, to a joint meeting between the chief staff officers of the companies (known as the Railways Staff Conference) and the Unions. A Union or Unions desiring an alteration must follow a similar procedure. Decisions in these cases are reached only by agreement. Negotiations at this stage are more informal than those conducted at the

¹ Similar machinery was also established by agreement for the railway side (including the clerical grade) of the London Underground Combine—now the London Passenger Transport Board

Railway Staff National Council, which is the next higher authority.

The Railway Staff National Council is a joint body formally constituted of eight representatives of the companies—two from each of the 'Big Four'—and eight representatives of the Unions, four from the N.U.R. and two each from the A.S.L.E. & F. and the R.C.A. To this Council matters other than those of a minor character may be referred by any one or more of the Companies or Unions, provided any such matter has gone through the preceding stage or stages. Here again decisions are reached by agreement, although such agreement may be minuted as reached 'by a majority'. If, however, a minority of either or both sides asks to have its dissent also minuted, there is no agreement.

The final stage of this elaborate but very effective machinery is the Railway Staff National Tribunal. This consists of three members—one selected by the Railway Companies; one selected by the Trade Unions, with a chairman appointed by agreement between the parties or, failing agreement, by the Minister of Labour after consultation with the parties.

This Tribunal is assisted by representatives of the parties concerned, sitting as assessors. The Tribunal is reserved for issues of major importance, and its decisions are issued as 'Findings'. They are generally accepted, but there is no compulsory arbitration.

The negotiating of standard rates of pay and conditions of service is a vital Trade Union function, but equally important is the proper application and maintenance of agreements when they have been negotiated. On the railways the Trade Unions, in addition to direct representations, function for this purpose through the local machinery and in particular through the sectional councils. These are modelled on the Whitley scheme of Industrial Councils, but provide for direct election of the employees' representatives. These are invariably the nominees of the Trade Unions; they appoint their own Trade Union secretary,

and in the case of the salaried staff councils the secretary of the employees' side is always a full-time officer of the R.C.A.

There are five of these sectional councils on each of the railways covering the grades within each of the four railway departments, and another council covering the salaried staff in all departments.

The function of a sectional council is recorded in the signed agreement between the Companies and the Unions as the consideration of:

(i) Suggestions as to operating, working and kindred subjects and other matters in which a Company and their employees are mutually interested, e.g., co-operation with a view to securing increased business, greater efficiency and economy; the well-being of the staff; general principles governing recruitment and tenure of service.

(ii) The local application of National Agreements relating to standard salaries, wages, hours of duty and other standard conditions of service.

Similarly, the local departmental committees provide a recognised means of communication between the employees and the local officials of each Company at each station, shed or depot, and deal with more local matters, such as link-working, holiday rosters, meal times, and so on.

It is not competent for any sectional council or departmental committee to modify or contravene any national agreement, but it may be noted that the 'application' of such agreements is a matter to be settled not by a railway officer's arbitrary decision, but by agreement through these constitutional channels. All decisions at these joint meetings are arrived at by agreement. Failing agreement, a particular matter may be referred to the Trade Union concerned, which may raise it with the headquarters of the Company concerned. Minor issues thus referred are

settled in this way, and in any event are not carried beyond the Railways Staff Conference. More important matters may go to the Railway Staff National Council through the Trade Union or Company concerned or, in exceptional circumstances, to the Chairman of the National Tribunal, and major issues by consent to the Chairman for decision or to the National Tribunal under the formal procedure prescribed.

It should also be explained that arising out of many past conflicts there is now a recognised 'disciplinary' procedure under which an employee charged with any serious offence must have the charge stated in writing, be given an opportunity to call witnesses in his defence, and, if he so desires, be accompanied by his Trade Union advocate at both the first stage and (if the case goes to the chief officer) on appeal. Inquiry therefore precedes punishment, and arbitrary dismissal and even wrongful punishment of a gross character may be said to be a thing of the past.

Special reference needs to be made to the position of railway staff employed on constructional, repair maintenance work under 'shop conditions'. And as their conditions are related to those of the engineering industry, and as they are catered for by Trade Unions whose main membership is outside the railway service (although a substantial number of shopmen in the lesser skilled grades are in membership of the N.U.R.), such employees are not included in the agreements and arrangements described above. None the less, negotiating machinery modelled on similar lines applies also to the 'shop staff', although owing to the large number of Unions concerned it does not function in quite the same way. For example, in national negotiations the twenty-five Unions comprised within the federation of the engineering and shipbuilding trades, and the eight additional engineering craft and general workers' Unions catering for railway engineering staff, together with the N.U.R., appoint ten delegates to meet the railway officers. Then there are shop committees, works committees, and department

line committees functioning on similar lines to the Sectional Councils and local committees already described, to deal with local and shop matters.

In the event of disagreement between the Companies and these Unions, where the parties are prepared to arbitrate, reference is to the Industrial Court, and a binding decision is then given.

It remains to be stated that although discussions have taken place on the desirability of negotiated terms being applied, there are a little over 3,000 technical staff and a slightly smaller number of 'Shop' supervisors who are not at present included in the formal national agreements applying to other sections of the salaried staff. Their rates of pay and general conditions of service are, however, based on those negotiated agreements and approximate to them. Also, the R.C.A. acts for its members in these grades and for members of the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen (with which it has an agreement) in any individual or group difficulty.

Much more of an illuminating nature could of course be written about both the local and national machinery, illustrating the invaluable work done by the Unions in raising the standard of life of all railway workers and in inculcating a new dignity, self-respect and comradeship amongst all ranks; much, too, about the Unions' day-to-day work in respect of individual or group grievances—matters involving not only a knowledge of men and affairs, but of Workmen's Compensation, Employers' Liability and other legal technicalities, in regard to all of which it may be claimed that the Trade Union officials meet the highly-skilled railway staff officers on equal terms.

Much could also be written on the part played by the Railway Unions in national and international industrial affairs, and in local and national politics, through the Trades Union Congress, the Labour Party and the Divisional Labour Parties, the Federation of Professional Workers, the International Federation of Trade Unions and the International Transport Workers' Federation.

Some of the most famous cases in Trade Union Law—the Taff Vale case and the Osborne Judgment—arose out of railway Trade Unionism and greatly stimulated railwaymen to a recognition of the important part played by politics in their daily working life. At the present time nearly two-thirds of the members of the N.U.R. have contracted in to pay the Labour Party political levy, and over four-fifths of the members of the R.C.A. The proportion of the locomotivemen, curiously enough, is much lower, less than one-fourth. Four members of the N.U.R. are Labour M.P.s, whilst the R.C.A. has no less than seven members of the Party in the House of Commons. In practically every constituency and on innumerable municipal bodies, railwaymen, trained for service in their Trade Unions, play an invaluable part in civic life.

THE TRANSPORT WORKERS

THE TRANSPORT WORKERS form a much more heterogeneous body than the railwaymen, including seafarers, dockers and other waterside labourers, tramwaymen, busmen, taximen, canal workers, lorry drivers, and the clerical staffs attached to these various groups, as well as the less skilled maintenance, repair and cleaning staffs in garages and depots, warehousemen, cranemen, and a small host of miscellaneous workers. Moreover, the largest Union in the group, the Transport and General Workers' Union, includes a 'general' section in which it enrolls workers who have no connection with transport, from flour millers and chemical workers to labourers in tinplate works and agricultural workers. On the other hand it does not enrol seafarers, who are mostly organised in the National Union of Seamen. The officers in the Mercantile Marine have another separate Union, which is also affiliated to the Trades Union Congress, as well as two or three non-Trade Union associations; and seagoing engineers are also partly organised in the A.E.U.

The Transport and General Workers' Union, with its very heterogeneous membership, has adopted a form of sectional organisation under which each important group possesses representative machinery of its own. Each section has, moreover, its own negotiating officers, and normally each section draws up its own programme and puts forward its own demands, subject to the approval of the Executive Council representing the Union as a whole. The sections have, however, no power to declare or conduct strikes, except where this is specially delegated

to them by the Executive Council, which usually keeps the deciding authority in its own hands. In the recent London busmen's dispute of 1937 the Executive first delegated authority to the London Bus Council, and then took it back again when the busmen rejected proposed terms which it considered they ought to accept.

The London busmen have been for a long time the best organised and most militant section of the membership of the T. and G.W.U. Until quite recently, busmen in the provinces were badly organised, and many companies refused to recognise the Union or to bargain collectively with their employees. But of late, provincial organisation has greatly improved, especially since the companies have become consolidated into larger groups. Where the railway companies are part owners of road transport concerns the T. and G.W.U. and the N.U.R. usually work together.

Tramwaymen are also for the most part well organised, but much less militant than the busmen—largely because they are in many cases public employees with a job for life. Among lorry-drivers and carters, on the other hand, organisation is still weak in many areas, the multiplicity of small carriers making effective negotiations difficult. But over this group too the T. and G.W.U. has been increasing its hold, though it hardly touches the drivers in the countless scattered firms which transport their own goods.

Dock-workers present a difficult problem on account of their liability to casual employment. The Union has sought to secure the registration of port labour, in order to limit the number of irregular applicants for work; but the reduction in foreign trade has prevented decasualisation from being nearly as effective as was hoped. Large port authorities, such as the Port of London Authority, employ nucleus staffs of permanent workers receiving a regular weekly wage; but most dock work is still intermittent, so that actual earnings are often much lower than the daily wage-rates suggest. Nevertheless, waterside conditions

have been considerably improved; and the dock workers are now a well organised group in most of the larger ports.

The busmen, like the miners, are organised round their places of work, in groups for the various garages and depots. These groups exist side by side with the branches, which have a more mingled membership, and this form of 'shop' organisation partly accounts for the easy growth of a militant temper. Undoubtedly it is much easier to rouse an active Trade Union spirit of militancy when organisation is based on the place of work than when, as in most Unions, workers from a number of establishments are in the same branch, and very often workers from the same establishment are divided between a number of branches. This 'shop' organisation, which comes naturally to the miners because of their conditions of work, was the basis of the militant shop stewards' movement during the war. It has reproduced itself naturally in the omnibus depots, and has given further evidence of its potentially explosive qualities, which are unlikely to commend it to right-wing Trade Union leaders in search of a quiet life.

TRANSPORT AND TRADE UNIONISM

by

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ONE-THIRD OF THE organised workers of Great Britain are in Unions catering for transport and general workers 720,000 Trade Unionists are classified as coming under 'transport and general labour'—excluding the railwaymen and seamen. For general labour there are two considerable Unions—the General and Municipal Workers and the Transport and General Workers. The General and Municipal Workers' Union has a small membership of waterside workers, chiefly on the north-east coast, but the vast majority of the 122,000 insured workers employed in docks, harbours, rivers and canals are in the T and G.W.U. Only the Stevedores and Watermen's Union in London with about 6,000 members, the Scottish Dockers in Glasgow, with some 5,000, and the few hundreds of the Coal Trimmers' Union in Cardiff are outside.

The great majority of the 198,000 tram and bus workers are inside the Transport Union, as are the bulk of the 182,000 other road transport workers. Only three small road transport Unions remain outside—the Liverpool Carters' and Motormen's Union, the Manchester United Road Transport Workers' Association of England, and the Scottish Motormen. Apart from the main railway, transport and general Unions, there were in 1936 twenty-one other organisations with a total membership of only 27,000.

The Transport and General Workers' Union with 650,000 members, is the largest single union in Great Britain and is the result of a merger of thirty-eight Unions. A Union of this size could hardly exist without some real feeling of united purpose among the members, some adequate recognition of the diversities in trade and calling throughout its sections, and some strong central authority coupled with an administration sufficiently flexible to permit of initiative in the many district trade groupings and branches. The Union, apart from its general labour membership, has been built around two substantial sections: (a) docks and waterways, and (b) roads. The importance of roads has grown enormously; bus, coach, and tramway organisation has been brought to a high pitch, but in goods transport, because of individualism and small ownership, membership is still short of the standard in the other sections.

The Great War and its aftermath set the conditions in which the creation of the Union was possible. Men's minds had been profoundly affected; recognition of unionism had been won, industrial experience had strengthened national rather than district bargaining; and consequently Trade Union habits of thought had been subtly modified. Before the war there were abortive discussions inside the Transport Workers' Federation (created in 1910-11) about amalgamation. The idea of the present fusion, however, was launched in 1920. Bevin's brilliant advocacy at the famous Dockers' Inquiry of 1920 had compelled the attention of working-class Britain, because he expressed the common claim of all workers. Almost at once the advances won were to be challenged and standards forced down. Association among employers had gone a long way, and they were shaping a labour policy. Conciliation and consultative machinery could not hide from intelligent Trade Unionists the fact that in slump and soaring prices Trade Union individualism meant divided forces, retreat and disappointment. Even while

negotiations for a new transport Union were proceeding the Triple Alliance broke disastrously because it had no inherent cohesion and the many small Unions were jealous of their autonomy.

Bevin in 1920 and 1921 garnered hopes and removed apprehensions. He broke through the web of conservative interests and propagated a new conception to cope with the new conditions. The Transport Workers' Federation had been responsible for many national movements and in 1920 had conducted the Dockers' Enquiry and the Road Transport Enquiry. But it was inadequate. When three dozen executive committees had to be convinced, action was bound to be slow and unity difficult. Nevertheless, co-operation inside the Federation had served a valuable purpose.

The two largest Unions of the Dockers came together in conference in 1920, and by August fourteen Unions of dock, waterside and allied workers were considering amalgamation. To these were added later the road transport workers, and by December nineteen Unions were trying to make a constitution adaptable to trade differences and flexible enough for other Unions to come in. Only fourteen Unions secured the necessary majority in favour of amalgamation. They represented 300,000 workers about the docks and canals, in passenger and goods road transport, the watermen, the coal trimmers and distributors, and the clerks and supervisors. The new Union started on its way in January 1922.

The creation of so powerful a body stopped much waste of money, strength and morale: it added to the industrial and political movement an enlightened and abler force. The Unions which were woven together were varied in size and strength. Some of their leaders, like Tillet, Sexton, Gosling and Bevin, are inseparably bound up with the growth of the industrial movement in the past fifty years. Some of the Unions concerned had played a noteworthy part in Trade Union history. The watermen had

organisations in the fourteenth century. The dockers, in the late 'eighties and early 'nineties of last century, had changed the whole face of the Trade Union world. Quite a few of the Unions had destroyed, in the early 'nineties, the belief of the earlier craft unionists that durable Trade Unionism among general labourers was impracticable. Almost all the Unions concerned had stressed Trade Unionism more as a struggle for a fuller life than as a movement for friendly benefits. They were already making mass organisation the dominant influence in British Trade Unionism.

Among these Unions was the Merseyside Dockers' organisation, formed in 1889. Dockers were then Ishmaels, outside protective laws and suffering appalling conditions. Sexton found himself in competition with the sick and burial clubs, and had the utmost difficulty in getting even $\frac{1}{2}d.$ out of the $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ contribution for executive purposes. From Liverpool that Union stretched out to Scotland and to Ireland. The United Vehicle Workers, which also came in, resulted from a merger of the principal Unions of tramwaymen and busmen in 1919. The old tram Union was born in Manchester in 1889, when horse drivers were thought unsuitable for Trade Unionism. Its first success had been a day off each fortnight and later a reduction of the working day from $14\frac{1}{2}$ hours to $10\frac{1}{4}$ hours. The bus Union was mainly composed of the London busmen and taximen, who played later a spirited part in the big Union. The London watermen enjoyed special rights by charter and custom, and were in a regulated and licensed position. Their Societies existed on the Thames in 1789. The Union which now joined in was formed in 1872. Another Union, important though small, organised the clerical and supervisory staffs mainly in the Thames docks and wharves. Most notable of all was the Dockers' Union, which had grown out of the tiny group of tea-warehouse-porters and general labourers formed by Tillet in 1887. It had won fame and notoriety in the dispute of 1889 by demanding the docker's tanner.

The new Union was built on somewhat novel lines. It was not limited to a craft or industry or type of employer, nor was it an ordinary general Union. Primarily, it had been intended to constitute a dock and riverside Union; but it had broadened into a Union for all transport (outside the sea and railways) and for industries closely related to transport as well.

The railways remained outside its scope. There have been organising problems in respect to goods and passenger road transport, but good sense has overcome them and rough lines of demarcation between the railway and transport Unions have been drawn. Likewise, after an anxious period, the organisation of seamen was recognised as a matter for the National Union of Seamen and Firemen.

Nor was the Union limited to general workers. It embraced skilled workers as well as the non-manual grades. The view was taken that all workers in the industries and services covered had a common interest, and that the association of non-manual with manual workers in an industry would help to give the former increased power and influence in negotiation, and the Union itself a larger purpose. By covering many different services and industries dependence and co-operation inside a large Union would benefit all.

The membership is divided into eight national groups—Docks; Waterways; Passenger Road Transport Services; Commercial Road Transport; Power Workers; Metal Engineering and Chemical; Clerical; General. A ninth group for the fishing industry is now in course of formation, as a result of the amalgamation of the Fishing Section, mainly at Fleetwood and Milford Haven, and already in the Transport and General Workers' Union, and the Scottish and Humber Fishermen's Unions.

The General group embraces such diverse sections as: (i) food and drink, (ii) sugar beet, (iii) artificial silk, (iv) linen, hosiery, blankets, (v) municipal non-trading, (vi) gas and electricity supply, (vii) civil engineering

construction, (viii) cement, clay, chalk, (ix) paint, colour, varnish, etc., and (x) markets. In addition, the group has attached to it two sub-sections (a) flour milling and agriculture, and (b) building trade. The latter is the largest grouping of organised builders' labourers operating to-day.

The Docks Group includes coal shipping. The Metal Group embraces tinplate, galvanising, chemicals, aluminium, lead, copper, spelter, cable, tin mining, oil refinery, engineering, ship breaking and many other trades. The Power Workers' Group, which was formerly the Power Engineers' and Firemen's Union, chiefly operates among the enginemen, firemen, motormen, mechanics, and electrical workers in collieries and in iron and steel. The Clerical group organises non-manual employees working alongside the men organised in any other group; it has never exceeded 11,000, chiefly in London, and its members are chiefly employed in the docks and wharves.

Each national group has a national committee and officers. The Committee holds office for two years, meets quarterly and is composed of one or more members from each area trade group committee. It overlooks group business relating to pay and conditions of work, national organising, and special trade benefits or facilities, and sends a member to the Central Executive Council. It may have trade sub-sections.

The country is also divided into thirteen territorial areas: (1) London and Home Counties, (2) South of England, including the Channel Islands, (3) West of England, (4) South Wales, (5) Midlands, (6) North-West and North Wales, (7) Scotland, (8) North-East, (9) Yorkshire and North Midlands, (10) East Coast, (11) Ireland, (12½) Liverpool and Isle of Man, (13) North Wales Quarrymen. The last is chiefly a special geographical group of quarrymen and enjoys considerable autonomy.

Each area has a Committee and a Secretary. The former is appointed for two years and composed of representatives of the area trade group committees (no more

than three members are allowed from each trade group). It meets quarterly and administers the general business of the Union in the area; it looks after organising, co-ordinates group activity, and deals with publicity, educational and political work, and financial administration.

The Area Trade Group is the membership of a group in one of these areas. It has its committee and its own officers. The Committee meets quarterly, transacts the trade business of the members in the locality, and has the right of being consulted upon all matters directly affecting the group's interest. It is elected by ballot of the group members.

The members are grouped in about 3,000 branches, based on no single principle beyond that of trade—some depend on place of occupation, others on geography, etc. There are branches as remote as Gibraltar, Malta, Jersey, and in out-of-the-way places in Ireland and Scotland.

The general executive council administers the Union's general national business. It is composed of a representative of each national group committee and one from each area (where membership is between 50,000—150,000, two may be elected, and where 150,000 and more, three). The Council serves two years, meets quarterly, and appoints all full-time officers (except the General and Financial Secretaries, who are elected to office by ballot vote and hold it during the pleasure of the Union). It overlooks the business of the national trade group and area committees, and exercises complete financial control, including, of course, exclusive power to sanction strike action and payment of benefit. It has power to prepare programmes of action and policy generally, provided that before sanctioning a strike of (a) all the members of the Union or (b) two or more national trade groups it obtains the approval of a special delegate conference and acts in accordance with the ballot vote taken in consequence of such approval.

Ultimate authority is in the Biennial Delegate Conference, constituted from the area trade groups by ballot vote.

The success of the organisation is in no small way due to (a) the autonomy possessed by the groups in trade matters; (b) the fact that by pooling resources better services are possible in legal, research, social, political and friendly matters; (c) that all the parts are able to help one another; (d) sound and large organisation can exercise a greater influence in negotiation and with the public; and (e) there is a powerful central direction and executive financial control.

It took some years of patient work and propaganda to accustom men to the discipline of a responsible national organisation. Greater effectiveness might have been achieved had all the Unions concerned with transport come in. The construction of trade and area committees, the preservation of existing rights, the unification of machinery and selection of appropriate officials, the arrangement of equitable contributions and benefits—all this was a colossal task. It was important that the amalgamation should prove something more than an inert mass of members. The idea of 'pride of calling' became a watch-word, and harmonious working was achieved by providing for the special problems of every trade or group.

In modern conditions Trade Union effectiveness is diminished by constant resort to open warfare. The primary purpose in the eyes of a member is the protection and improvement of wages, hours and conditions. Strike action is not liked by men in steady employment, and is resorted to only when negotiations prove abortive. The regulation of conditions by agreement over a wide field, with appropriate machinery for dealing with grievances, need not deprive a Union of virility.

A large Union must have a well ordered and disciplined membership—it cannot afford irresponsible administration because this would fritter away its influence in sporadic efforts. The Union has therefore tried to make local and

national agreements covering its members, to establish a respect for agreements, and to use the machinery set up for the changes required. Behind negotiations are the resources of mass organisation. Because of this the Union set up a strong central authority instead of a loose federation. At the same time, the 'feel' of the workshop and the garage is brought into all committee work, local and national, and control of policy is in the hands of the members. Control by the officials of the central executive is impossible; in its general deliberations there are usually only three officials present to give information and advice. When trade matters are being considered, the principal officers of the group concerned are present. Responsibility is therefore with the elected members, and consequently 'unofficial' action has always been discouraged. This does not take initiative from the branches. They may launch new ideas, forward matters to their trade representatives and committees, and urge their views.

An outstanding feature of the Transport Union has been the opportunity afforded to the lay members for self-government. The Union is represented on 23 Joint Industrial Councils (including Flour Milling, Tramway Undertakings, Quarrying, Municipal Non-Trading, on 8 Government Industrial Councils, on 1 Interim Industrial Relations Committee, on 26 Trade Boards (including Milk Distributive, Tobacco, Food), on 14 Conciliation Boards (including Docks, Building Trade, Coal Trimming, Agriculture, Galvanising), and on 2 Joint Councils.

The Union has displayed a constructive spirit. In the docks, for instance, a responsible attitude to the industry, and the workers in it, is obvious—in its work for registration and decasualisation, safety precautions, the study of conditions and pay in the competitive North Sea ports, and the support given to International Conventions. Likewise, in passenger road transport, the Union has tackled the chaos of the roads and the standardisation of tramway wages. It worked for the London Traffic Act, 1924, the

London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee, and the Road Traffic Act with all the consequent regulations. It can take credit for its work for the proper regulation of road traffic and the system of licences. In recent years it has made a great effort to check the chaos and appalling conditions of employment in commercial road-transport. The bad organisation of employers and men alike had to be overcome after national agreements and industrial councils had broken down. Following the Transport Act of 1933 the Union made another effort and got a National Joint Council. Its awards were resisted, and the organised employers and men alike asked that rates and conditions should be enforced on all commercial licence holders. This year, a Road Haulage Wages Bill covering all commercial vehicles has been passed—an interesting piece of industrial legislation which will bring order into this partially regulated service and which, incidentally, makes statutory provision for holiday remuneration for the first time.

Generally, the variety of orders in connection with dangerous occupations, pensions and compensation for men displaced as the result of machinery and rationalisation, etc., speak well for its work.

There is a danger in large organisation that a bureaucratic machine may become oppressive. Apart, however, from the wide range of local activities, area administration is a common interest for members over a wide district. There is a purse available for local causes and political and educational work. It might be suggested that the national trade groups might have funds for special general interests; but the Executive Council has always been ready to recognise the differences between sections and to provide funds for reasonable group purposes. Obviously, there must be some measure of administrative uniformity in spite of the diversity; but, on the whole, the Union has maintained flexibility, and there has grown up a ready recognition by all sections of what is desirable for the common good.

There are sometimes difficulties; but consolidation has brought so many advantages that division is unlikely. The planning of branches and offices in almost every town has helped to create this corporate spirit, for members turn to the Union for advice on the whole range of their social and industrial affairs.

The Union has spared no efforts to secure effective organisation in the trades for which agreements are held and after that to expand into newer industries. Amalgamation undoubtedly saved some of the smaller Unions from dissolution. The Unions which still remain outside have all discussed many times the question of joining. But some of the difficulties have come from the workers themselves. The orderly withdrawal in the slump of 1922-3 was a severe test to a Union scarcely established. 1923 saw a breakdown of discipline and a number of unauthorised strikes in the ports of London, Hull, Manchester, Grimsby, and Cardiff. The stevedores, whose organisation was well established before 1889 and had never come into the new Union, took advantage of the situation. A secessionist movement was got going and a few dockers and a large number of London watermen made a new combination and called it the Society of Stevedores, Lightermen, Watermen and Dockers. Soon it included most of the stevedores and lightermen in the port. Efforts later at closer unity failed.

In the principal industries concerned, irrespective of the existence of other Unions, the policy of the Union has been the important factor in determining conditions of employment. But so large and complex a Union, covering so many industries, is faced with many problems which concern other Unions as well. More important than increased membership is the success of Trade Unionism as a whole and the avoidance of unnecessary conflict; understandings have therefore been reached with other Unions; e.g. the Amalgamated Engineering Union; the National Union of Railwaymen regarding provincial

omnibus undertakings; the Miners by the affiliation to the Miners' Federation of the Winding Enginemens' Section of the Power Workers' Group; the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation on demarcation; the Seamen, Distributive Workers, and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers on organisation. The various sections have also been affiliated to the federations of Unions in the appropriate industries.

It took time to remove some of the complications in the path of the new Union. The Transport Workers Federation was wound up after an effort to reconstruct it on a broader basis so as to include the railway workers. As to the Workers' Union, it was founded in 1898 and at the peak of its success had 500,000 members; it had exposed itself to much criticism by its organising methods, and the merger with the Transport Union in 1929-30 was a welcome development for Trade Unionism as a whole.

The financial strength of the Union is now fully restored. Income in 1936 was over £800,000—nine-tenths from contributions. The General Fund was £800,000 and total funds £887,000. This is achieved in the main on a 6d. contribution (women 3d.) with a special 6d. each quarter for extraneous purposes. A comparatively small number of members pay a few pence more for additional friendly benefits, but this is a legacy from pre-amalgamation days. Friendly benefits, though important, are not a dominant factor in shaping policy. There are no separate funds. Indeed, from a recent return showing the average contribution per member as £1 10s. 5d. a year, 16s. 10d. was required for working expenses and 8s. 4d. for trade and other benefits. The amalgamation was carried through to strengthen efforts for better conditions, and thus has thrown into relative unimportance the other important benefits.

Thus, in 1936, apart from Dispute Benefit, the cash benefits paid to members were £22,000 for accidents, £46,000 for sickness, £34,000 for funeral, £14,000 for

superannuation, and £7,750 for distress. Associated with the Union is an Approved Society under the National Health Insurance Acts of 66,000 members. There is also a magnificent Convalescent Home in Cambridgeshire, which receives 1,700 members a year.

It is difficult to estimate the advantages which have come from amalgamation. Probably a few disputes have been due to mistakes in policy, but the Union has had to resist bitter attacks from employers and to rebut the disruptive tactics of certain of its less responsible members. After the unofficial dispute of 1923, it successfully conducted in 1924 the two major disputes—the National Dockers' Stoppage and the London Traffic Dispute. There have been other large national and local disputes and, on the whole, the Union has shown wisdom and firmness in face of unofficial action, even to the risk of difficulty and unpopularity. It has always preferred discussion to strike action, and consequently has secured enormous concessions without dispute; but it has never shirked its responsibilities. The dockers in particular have shown remarkable courage and endurance: the demoralisation of casual labour has never destroyed their loyalty. And the Union has always been ready to support other Unions. Transport is a service to all industries, and it has been readily assumed that whatever the nature of a dispute concerning another industry, the transport worker should risk his livelihood in helping the workers involved. In a great spirit of comradeship he has generally responded. At the time of the General Strike, when 350,000 members were involved at a cost to the Union of over £1,000,000, the contribution was generously given. And as evidence of its faith, it tried, as far back as 1924, to revive an industrial alliance on a broader and more rational basis than the famous Triple Alliance.

The success achieved is seen in the members' improved standard of life. Tillett wrote in the "Dockers' Bitter Cry" in 1887: "Horrible London is painfully and acutely

realised by our members in all its agonizing torment and debasement. . . . There can be nothing ennobling in an atmosphere where we are huddled and herded together like cattle; there is nothing refining in the thought that to obtain employment we are driven into a shed, iron-barred from end to end, outside of which a foreman or contractor walks up and down with the air of a dealer in a cattle-market, picking and choosing from a crowd of men who, in their eagerness to obtain employment, trample each other underfoot, and where like beasts they fight for the chances of a day's work." The contrast with conditions today is immense.

Since the amalgamation the accumulated benefits paid out to members amount to £5,000,000. In 1936 no less than £234,000 was secured in compensation payments and legal recovery. Since the amalgamation, recovery and compensation has reached the sum of £2,448,000.

The work done in respect to legal assistance is considerable—whether in trying to get occupational diseases scheduled, protective safeguards to health, wage recoveries, and claims admitted for work done, or in watching cases in respect to unemployment insurance, and health and pension insurance.

And in political work, both local and national, the Union has utilised all constitutional forms open to it. Parliament and local councils are used to voice and obtain redress of grievances and improved social conditions. Today eight Members of Parliament are financially supported by it, and there is in Parliament a group of fifteen members. In addition, members serve on municipalities, docks authorities, catchment boards, unemployment boards, etc.

The Union also maintains an Information and Research section, a publicity department, and issues a monthly journal, *The Record*; it has an Education scheme and owns Transport House (the Head Office of the Labour Party and T.U.C.). It is affiliated to the International Transport Workers' Federation, and its many groups are affiliated

to the appropriate international trade secretariats. Through the I.L.O. it has worked hard for conventions on Hours of Labour, Docks Safety, Conditions of Maritime Employment, Holidays with Pay, etc.

The Union has seen its officials transferred to situations of influence in public life. It has encouraged its younger officials to engage in wider fields of service. It has tried to contribute by work, imaginative effort and resources to the great industrial and political movements of the country.

In conclusion, a word must be said about the seamen. The Sailors' and Firemen's Union received a great impact by the Dockers' Strike of 1889, but it passed away in the subsequent reaction. Again in 1911 it conducted a great dispute, demanding a Conciliation Board. It played a useful part inside the Transport Workers' Federation, but during and after the war its close association with the shipping employers aroused considerable criticism. It was led by the late Havelock Wilson, and by 1920 its membership was 60,000. The Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union was a challenge to the policy of those years; but that organisation after a fruitless fight retired from the field with the Seamen's Union still strongly entrenched. The Transport and General Workers' Union was asked to organise a new section for the discontented seamen; but before that step was thought desirable a new General Secretary was appointed to the Seamen's Union and its policy was reviewed. Affiliation to the T.U.C. and later to the Labour Party followed, and that change brought a new spirit into its work. In recent years, the Seamen and the T. and G.W.U. have co-operated with appreciable results, and it can record considerable achievement for its members both by parliamentary effort and in the I.L.O. The authority and prestige of the Seamen's Union have been fully restored, and today, its progress is steady and its work thorough and effective.

THE BUILDERS

THE BUILDING INDUSTRY has experienced during the present century remarkable alternations of activity and depression. A period of extensive building in the first years of the century gave place to a very serious slump, due largely to high interest rates, in the years before 1914. During the war house-building was almost entirely suspended; and the labour force, already depleted by pre-war unemployment, was further reduced, so that after the war there was in some trades an acute shortage of skilled workers. There were vast arrears of house-building to be made up; and for a brief period intensive housing activity coincided with widespread industrial building during the post-war boom. Demands were made on the Trade Unions to accept the 'dilution' of labour; and a shortened apprenticeship scheme was introduced. But from 1921, in the period of slump, the Government curtailed housing expenditure side by side with the decline in commercial demand; and building activity revived only under the stimulus of the Housing Acts of 1923 and 1924. It rose steeply until 1928, and then began to decline. The second Labour Government gave it a renewed stimulus; but the crisis of 1931 caused a fresh demand for public economy side by side with a collapse of the demand for industrial building. In 1933, however, the sharp fall in interest rates led to a remarkable boom in private house-building, which reached its peak in 1935, and continued at a high level through 1936 and 1937.

Thus, building Trade Unionism has had in recent years to adapt itself to a remarkable series of changes in the

volume and character of demand. It has had to face, in each boom, proposals for dilution involving a breaking-down of established standards and conditions, without any guarantee that employment would be maintained permanently at a level high enough to absorb the additional workers. Actually, even at the height of the boom of recent years, unemployment in the industry as a whole has remained severe, especially among the less skilled workers. Nevertheless, the Trade Union structure remains in essence unchanged. Building Trade Unionism is still organised on a basis of separate crafts, and the traditional lines of demarcation remain in being, despite the growth of new processes and methods of construction. One or two new groups, such as the Constructional Engineers, have come into being; but the old crafts—woodworkers, bricklayers, masons, painters, plasterers, plumbers, and the rest—still dominate the movement.

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY

by

R. COPPOCK

General Secretary, National Federation of Building Trades Operatives

and

H. HEUMANN

MR. POSTGATE FINDS his 'Builders' History' with the establishment of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives in 1918—as a successor to the Building Trades Council of 1914. We have not the space even to summarise the early dramatic struggles of the Builders or the various experiments of the immediate post-war period in the field of industrial self-government—the Builders Parliament (1918), the Foster Report (1919) and the Building Guilds (1920). We must start where Mr. Postgate ends, for since 1918 the history of the Building Trade Unions has been largely the history of the Federation.

One of the Federation's first important jobs was to tackle the problem of dilution. The Government proposed that 50,000 ex-service men should be accepted for training in the building industry, but as there was already heavy unemployment among builders and the Government offered no guarantee against the consequences of a further increase, the Unions refused to accept the proposal and put the matter to a ballot vote of their members. The vote went heavily against the scheme, and, early in 1921, the Minister was informed of the building operatives' opinion that there was ample building trade labour available, if the industry was properly organised.

A landmark in the history of building Trade Unionism was the adoption of the 44-hour week without a reduction in wages in 1920, appropriately on May 1st. This provision, embodied in the National Agreement, has several times been varied slightly (although not in principle). The first variation, in 1923, followed a national dispute, caused by the employers' demand for a 20 per cent reduction in wages at the end of what was known as the stabilisation period. The arbitration award extended the hours to $46\frac{1}{2}$ during the statutory summer period. That rule still holds good, but the principle of the 44 hours remains and the 44-hour week operates in a number of towns all the year round. The 1923 dispute, which covered wages as well as hours, was referred to the same arbitrator; the chief result was that in future wage fluctuations (apart from the regrading of districts) were to depend on the cost of living instead of additionally on a clause allowing for variation of wages under exceptional economic circumstances. There can, of course, be wage variations outside the cost of living, but only by amending the agreement.

In the same year the value of united action was proved when through the Federation the building operatives won their first complete industrial victory. Employers in the Eastern Counties had tried to reduce painters' rates by a penny an hour—this being contrary to one of the Federation's cardinal principles—a uniform rate for all building trades craftsmen.

In January 1924 the building workers gave notice of 2d. an hour increase—their first unified national demand for a wage increase. The negotiations, following the employers' offer of a $\frac{1}{2}$ d., went on till June. At the last minute the employers instituted a lock-out because of the rejection of the settlement by the Liverpool operatives, who claimed that they were not attached to the National Agreement, as the Liverpool employers had broken away from their national organisation in 1919. The Liverpool employers, having rejoined in 1923, expected the Liverpool operatives to accept the national machinery: but as this involved the

abandonment of certain concessions, the operatives refused to be covered by the June settlement. A Court of Inquiry, held under the Industrial Courts Act of 1919, reported that the main cause of the contention lay in the refusal of the Liverpool operatives to accept the June settlement or to submit to the decisions of the National Wages and Conditions Council.

The national lock-out was answered by a strike, controlled by the Federation. A feature of its policy was the authorising of members to return to work with those employers who, as well as paying the $\frac{1}{2}d.$ increase, agreed to concede 50 per cent of the time lost through inclement weather or to enter into negotiations for that purpose. The settlement under which the $\frac{1}{2}d.$ increase was given included a provision for the appointment of a Joint Wet Time Committee. Its final Report was issued in 1926, and as a national scheme could not be agreed the matter was left to regional negotiation. But it was decided during the negotiations in connection with the new National Agreement of 1926 that wet time should be considered on a joint contributory basis. In 1928, therefore, discussions on the subject were renewed, the Ministry of Labour was drawn in, and eventually a special committee was appointed to formulate proposals under the Unemployment Insurance Act. As a result, a scheme of wet-time payment has now been drawn up, and ratified by the members. It is a contributory scheme, for which workers pay as well as the employers, but the operatives' organisation will have joint control over the scheme and because of its statutory imposition all employers and all workers—whether organised or not—will have to pay and all workers will accordingly benefit. One of the worst features of building employment will have been partly removed.

The negotiating machinery of the industry has, in spite of a number of changes, retained the principles established with the formation of the National Wages and Conditions Council in 1920, namely that wages, hours and conditions of labour shall be decided on a national basis, with local

variations, which need endorsement by the national body: that neither side will sanction any variation of the agreement except through the procedure of the Council; and that wages be adjusted—apart from regrading—on the sliding-scale basis under the influence of the cost of living figures. In 1924 and 1930 the operative parties—which include the Federation and the majority of its affiliated Unions as separate independent units of the Council—gave notice to secede from the Council, as they were dissatisfied with the wages position and found the Council's constitutional procedure an obstacle to satisfactory progress.

In 1926, following the negotiations succeeding the notice of secession, the title of the Council was changed to 'The National Joint Council for the Building Industry' and its powers were extended. Whereas the old Council handled only those disputes which affected the interpretation of its own decision, the revised constitution (adopted in 1932 after negotiation, which followed the operatives' notice of withdrawal in 1930) provided for conciliation machinery for all disputes between federated employers and operatives.

In 1927 an Agreement for the Prevention of Disputes in the Building Industry was reached with the employers, known as the 'Green Book' Procedure; and reference is now made to this in the Joint Council's rules. The Council is a body of twenty operatives' and twenty employers' representatives. A decision, to be binding, must receive the majority of votes of each side of those present and voting. The Chairman has one vote only.

The constitution provides for the establishment of Regional and Local Joint Wages Committees, which may agree on a grading or re-grading of a district, on exceptional rates (for a specified period), on extra payments for exceptionally hard or disagreeable work, and on lodging and travelling allowances (all subject to the endorsement of the national body), but cannot vary the standard rates or the hours, except within the national rule, which fixes a 44 hour week for most of the year, 46½ hours in

summer, and $41\frac{1}{2}$ in winter. This means there can be variation between $41\frac{1}{2}$ and $46\frac{1}{2}$ only.

Present rates are determined on a sliding scale basis. The Joint Council, at its statutory meeting held every January, averages the official cost of living index figures for the preceding twelve months, January to December. The 'datum standard rate' is the 'A' grade rate of 1s. 8d. an hour for craftsmen, which is assumed to correspond to a cost of living index figure of 65 points above July 1914, and for every deviation of $6\frac{1}{2}$ points from 65 (up or down) there is a variation of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. an hour. The labourers' rate is 75 per cent of the craftsmen's.

When the Joint Council was established in 1920 there were seventeen grades. In 1922 London gained two 'super' rates—(1) $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. an hour above the 'A' grade, as the inner London rate, applying to a radius of twelve miles from Charing Cross, and (2) an outer London rate of 1d. above 'A', applying to an area from twelve to fifteen miles from Charing Cross.

Apart from London there are now only nine grades, and about 80 per cent of building workers are covered by the 'A' grade—a striking contrast to the chaotic pre-war days, when every town and every craft had its own rate.

The Council no longer extends to Scotland, for in 1930 a separate body, with a similar constitution and similar functions was formed for Scotland. Wages there are also determined on a sliding-scale basis, but the datum standard rate is 1s. $7\frac{1}{2}$ d., corresponding to 50 points above pre-war, this being a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. more in certain cases than the English rate.

In addition to the National Joint Council for the Building Industry, which deals with wages, hours and conditions, there are *ad hoc* Disputes Commissions, provided under the 'Green Book' procedure for the prevention of industrial conflicts, and an *ad hoc* tri-partite tribunal, with representatives of the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors, as well as of Building Operatives and Employers, to decide whether on a given work building

wage-rates or (the lower) civil engineering rates should be paid.

Building workers have always been keenly interested in the subject of housing. After discussion between the Federation and the Labour Government Ministers of Health and Labour, a Housing (Financial Provisions) Act was passed in 1924, which included a fair wages clause—which came to be embodied in later acts—in connection with housing contracts carrying a Government subsidy, and later gave rise to local Building Industry Committees for the encouragement of apprenticeship. In return for the operatives' consent to accept apprentices beyond the usual age, through the medium of the B.I.C.s, the Government guaranteed a fifteen year housing programme. In subsequent legislation the guarantee became ineffective, and the B.I.C.s automatically languished.

Following the arrival of the second Labour Government the Emergency Committee of the Federation reported to the 1931 Annual Conference that "having in mind the rising unemployment in the building industry, the Emergency Committee took steps to initiate interest in the Slum Clearance Bill, which has since culminated in the Housing (No. 2) Act. To that end, propaganda designed to secure an effective national housing survey was conducted by means of a series of public conferences . . . furthered by numerous smaller meetings throughout the country. Local Housing Survey Councils, representative of all shades of opinion, were formed from or as a result of these demonstrations and meetings. . . ."

The housing policy of the Federation has been to secure a steady rate of building rather than feverish construction followed by practical cessation. It is therefore essential that legislation should be designed to encourage local authorities to undertake planned and orderly building, and to avoid violent fluctuations.

In the boom years following the 1931 slump the speculative jerry-builder came into prominence, and the Federation has conducted a persistent agitation against

his methods. This has resulted in the establishment, with the official blessing of the Minister of Health, of a National House Builders' Registration Council, on which are represented the Operatives' and Employers' Federations, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Chartered Surveyors' Institution, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, and the Building Societies' Association. Connected with the Registration Council is a National Housing Standards Board, whose duty it is to examine and comment on the material used in house construction. Jerry-builders are by no means eliminated yet, but their scope is a little restricted and would be considerably more restricted if the public would deal only with builders registered with the Council—whose products, therefore, carry a guarantee of satisfactory workmanship and material.

Soon after the 1924 national dispute the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers (i.e., Bricklayers' and Masons' Union) and the National Association of Operative Plasterers seceded from the Federation largely from dissatisfaction with the principle of the flat rate. Bricklayers and plasterers believed that they were in a better position to win higher rates for themselves if they were not hindered by their connection with the Federation. The A.U.B.T.W. remained outside the Federation for three years, and the Plasterers rejoined in 1933.

Before the Federation itself was many years old the subject of amalgamation was raised and considered at various Annual Conferences. An Amalgamation Committee was formed, but the result was inconclusive: its majority and minority Reports were both rejected, while the principle of amalgamating cognate trades was formally accepted. The national dispute of 1923 and the following year put an end, for the time being, to further discussions on amalgamation. The agitation persisted, however, and in 1928 a further Amalgamation Committee was appointed. Its final report was presented to the 1930 Conference when it was decided that a special meeting of the full Executive

Councils of the affiliated Societies be held at Chester later in the year to consider the matter.

The Chester Amalgamation Conference was representative of all the affiliated Unions and of the Plasterers, who had not yet rejoined. Of the sixteen Unions present thirteen declared their adherence to the principle of amalgamation, and three were not prepared to proceed further with the scheme. Of the thirteen which supported amalgamation, eleven expressed their willingness to put the matter to the vote of their respective members, one reserving the right to circulate a full explanation of its probable effects, four promising to recommend the scheme and two declaring that they were not in favour of this particular scheme. The remaining two who supported amalgamation were not fully represented by their Executives, but the delegates present agreed to report back to their Executives.

On the question of the pooling of funds (assets and liabilities of the different Unions), the societies agreed in principle, two advocated a *per capita* payment into a pool and the Plasterer's Association in view of its limited delegation was unable to commit itself. In view of the majority decision, it was agreed to adopt the principle of merging the funds, when placing the matter before the members for a vote. The Amalgamation Committee was brought into existence again to frame detail alterations in the scheme, and to draft the necessary rules. It may be added that of the five Unions whose delegates stated the scheme would be submitted with a recommendation of acceptance, two asked that the scheme should eventually undergo some modification. Another of the five also desired modification, although such modification was stated not to be a condition of recommending acceptance.

The ballot resulted in only one effective vote in favour of the scheme (i.e., with the affirmative votes satisfying the requirements of the Trade Union Amalgamation Act of 1917). Five other Unions recorded majorities for amalgamation, but their votes were insufficient to comply with the Act: and six Unions recorded votes against the

proposal. Four Unions (including the two General Labour Unions which are attached to the Federation in respect only of their building trades labourers) did not participate in the ballot.

The general amalgamation has, therefore, been checked for the time being. But amalgamation on a less ambitious scale has been achieved. In 1921 the London and Manchester Orders of Bricklayers and the Operative Stonemasons' Society merged in the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers: and in the same year the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, Cabinet-Makers and Joiners (formed in 1860 by Applegarth of the Junia as the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, the Cabinet-Makers being a later addition) joined with the General Union of Carpenters and Joiners (established in 1827) to form the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers. In 1929 the Workers' Union fused with the Transport and General Workers' Union, and the latter further took over the 'Altogether' Builders' Labourers & Constructional Workers' Society in 1934.

The Federation at present is composed of sixteen Unions. Of the four Scottish Unions, who joined in 1921, two remain—the Masons and the Slaters. A particular feature of the organisation is the Composite Section, formed in 1923 to cater for the building operatives in rural areas who would not be covered by any other Union. The composite members (who number about 2,600) are directly attached to the Federation, and have an Advisory Council of five members, elected on a geographical basis, of whom two are appointed to the Executive Council of the Federation. The Composite Section is an independent Union, and administers unemployment insurance benefit in the same way as other organisations.

The 1931 economic upheaval had a serious effect on the building industry, especially when the Government encouraged local authorities to restrict housing schemes. On the initiative of the Federation, a conference representing operatives, employers, architects, surveyors and

building-material merchants was convened to launch an anti-economy campaign.

This conference resulted in a permanently-established body now known as the Building Industries National Council, which has taken over the duties and functions of two other bodies—the Building Industry Council of Review—established early in 1929, to improve the industry by increasing efficiency and reducing costs, and the Advisory Council of the Building Industry, formed in 1931, to collect and co-ordinate information, and to discover the opinions of the different bodies within the industry on housing legislation and activity in order to influence in the proper way the policy of all public bodies on building problems.

These representative bodies have provided a medium through which the operatives have consistently ventilated their points of view, particularly in regard to such matters as wet-time payment, a planned industry, rationalisation, and the new building technique which bears so onerously on the operative when the human element is disregarded.

The building industry has not escaped the effects of rationalisation. Towards the end of 1929 regional conferences were held throughout the country to discuss this question, and in 1930 the general secretary wrote a pamphlet stressing the conclusion that “rationalisation cannot be applied to the advantage of the workers unless it is applied as a national service: it can be of no benefit whatever to the working class under capitalist society. Every improvement of machinery means higher profits for the employers and less earning capacity for the workers”.

Apart from the national disputes referred to and the movements made in connection with the reform of the Joint Council, there has been only one outstanding wage-issue in recent years. In 1935 the Federation advanced a claim for 1*d.* an hour increase. After negotiation the 1*d.* increase was won, to be paid in two instalments, the first effective for July 1st, 1935, and the second from January 1st, 1936.

The 1936 Annual Conference passed a resolution declaring that the constitution of the Federation had not kept pace with the developments of recent years, and appointed a special committee to consider what was needed to modernise it. Its report is expected at the 1938 Conference.

The Federation has always played a prominent part in international Trade Union affairs. The International Federations of Building and Wood Workers were amalgamated into a single body after the loss of the German Unions in 1933. The N.F.B.T.O. forms the British section of the combined International, of which the writer of this article is now the President.

THE METAL WORKERS

THE METAL TRADES, regarded as a whole, employ more workers than any other group of industries. Mining, textile, building and transport each account for over one million workers. Distribution accounts for about two and a quarter millions, the metal trades for well over two and a half.

But the metal group includes a very wide diversity of industries and processes, ranging from the making of pig-iron and raw steel to the many light trades manufacturing small goods for the final consumers. The group has therefore to be broken up into smaller units; for there is little in common between all its constituent elements. The main sub-groups falling within it are iron and steel manufacture, engineering—itself further divisible into a number of related industries—shipbuilding, vehicle manufacture, the electrical trades, and the minor metal trades. Iron and steel and engineering are the subject of special chapters in this book; but the remaining metal trades must be dealt with briefly in this introductory section.

The shipbuilding industry has suffered in recent years from very severe unemployment and a very sharp fall in the number of its insured workers. In 1923 there were 270,000 insured workers in the shipyard trades: in 1937 only 173,000. Moreover, despite the 'boom' in shipbuilding during the past year or two, even in 1937 no less than 22 per cent of the remaining workers were unemployed. In these circumstances it is not surprising that there has been a considerable fall in the membership of shipyard Trade Unions, or that their bargaining power has been

seriously weakened. The main shipyard trades are, however, very highly skilled; and in face of the difficulties the Unions have on the whole held together with remarkable tenacity.

The principal shipyard Unions are the United Society of Boilermakers and Iron and Steel Shipbuilders (51,000 in 1937), the Associated Blacksmiths' Society (8,000) and the Shipconstructors' and Shipwrights' Association (19,000). The first two of these have also many members outside the shipyards, principally in the engineering trades. Moreover, many of the engineering Trade Unions, and a number associated with other industries, have a considerable shipyard membership—e.g., the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, among ship joiners, etc., the Amalgamated Engineering Union, and the Painters, Plumbers and Upholsterers, and so on. In addition, the less skilled workers in the shipyards are organised, where they are Trade Unionists, mainly in the National Union of General and Municipal Workers; and all these Unions, and many others besides, are parties to the various shipyard agreements. Marine engineering, which forms a distinct trade and is partly carried on by separate firms, belongs to engineering rather than to shipbuilding.

The Boilermakers', Shipwrights' and Blacksmiths' Societies are craft Unions, similar in general type to the Unions in the engineering trades. The largest society, the Boilermakers, includes a number of related crafts—riveters, platers, caulkers, angle-iron smiths, and also the less skilled 'holders-on' or 'holders-up', but not the helpers or labourers. Wage and other negotiations are largely local; for they depend mainly on the conditions in particular shipyards. But general conditions are also dealt with nationally by negotiation with the Shipbuilding and Shiprepairing Employers' Federations, and also with the Federated Admiralty Contractors. The shipyard Unions have also naturally a considerable membership in the Royal Dockyards, for which separate machinery exists on a basis adopted from the Whitley scheme, including special

representative bodies for detailed negotiations in each dockyard.

The vehicle trades, which have increased their labour force from 192,000 insured workers in 1923 to 437,000 in 1937, employ, in comparison with the shipyards, a very high proportion of less skilled operatives. The making of motor-car engines is, of course, a skilled engineering job, and there is skilled work in coach-building and in the maintenance of the machinery used in the industry. Aircraft manufacture employs a large proportion of skilled craftsmen, including woodworkers, who are organised mainly in the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers. The largest body of craftsmen in the vehicle trades is in the Amalgamated Engineering Union, and in the other engineering craft Unions such as the Patternmakers and the Foundry Workers. The less skilled operatives, where they are organised at all, are in such Unions as the General and Municipal Workers; but in the great Austin and Morris factories these sections are still for the most part unorganised in any Union. There is no separate national negotiating machinery for the motor trade. Most firms belong to the Engineering Employers' Federation, and are parties to the general engineering agreements; while some very large firms refuse to recognise Trade Unions, and have no collective agreements at all, though in practice they usually pay their skilled workers the standard engineering rates.

The principal Union belonging specifically to the vehicle trades is the National Union of Vehicle Builders (24,000 in 1937); and there are one or two smaller Unions, such as the Amalgamated Society of Vehicle Builders (4,000) and the Wheelwrights' and Coachmakers' Union (1,200). But the vehicle workers' Unions hardly form a separate group; and in the motor section their wages and condition are closely bound up with those of the engineers. Another section, working on railway carriages and wagons made in the railway carriage shops, refers its disputes, in common with other grades of railway shopmen, to adjudication by the Industrial Court.

The minor metal trades constitute a highly miscellaneous group. At one end, the tinplate workers, tube workers, and wire drawers are closely associated with the iron and steel industry, to which they in effect belong. Of these, the two former are mainly organised in the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, though a certain number of the less skilled workers are in the general labour Unions. The wire-drawers, on the other hand, have their own Amalgamated Society (5,000 in 1937), and their own negotiating machinery with the employers. The workers in the minor branches of metal manufacture are without separate Unions, but some are in general labour Unions and some in the societies catering for brass-workers. The foundry workers in the light castings trades, as distinct from the moulders in heavy iron-founding, who are in the National Union of Foundry Workers (26,000), have two Unions of some importance—the National Union of Stove, Grate and General Metal Workers (5,600), and the Iron Founding Workers' Association (10,000), the latter being mainly Scottish. The sheet metal workers are in the National Union of Sheet Metal Workers and Braziers (15,000) or in one or another of the still surviving local Societies which this body has not absorbed. The Sheffield tool and cutlery trades are still split up among a number of small societies; and so are the workers in the minor metal trades of the Black Country, where there remains a host of little Unions, each catering for a particular trade or section. Another Sheffield industry is represented by the National Union of Gold, Silver and Allied Trades (3,600).

The electrical manufacturing trades have naturally increased their labour force very rapidly in recent years—from 61,000 insured workers in electrical engineering in 1923 to 126,000 in 1937, and in the other electrical manufacturing and wiring and contracting trades from 83,000 to 237,000. The principal Union organising these workers is the Electrical Trades Union (48,000); but the less skilled operatives are largely in the general Labour Unions

or in the National Union of Enginemen, Firemen, Mechanics, and Electrical Workers (23,000), which organises stationary enginedrivers and cranemen in many industries, and has in addition a substantial miscellaneous membership. The E.T.U. has also members in electrical generating and distributing stations, which are not included in the total given above for the number of workers in the industry. The supervisory workers in the power stations, however, are for the most part strongly organised in the Electrical Power Engineers' Association and the Society of Supervising Electricians, which both belong to the National Federation of Professional Workers, but not to the T.U.C. The engineering workers in the Post Office are in a separate body, the Post Office Engineering Union, which is described in another chapter.

Finally, the drawing offices of the shipbuilding and engineering firms furnish a significant example of success in organising non-manual workers and securing from reluctant employers the rights of collective bargaining. The Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen (14,000) belongs to the T.U.C. as well as to the N.F.P.W., and is on excellent terms with the manual workers' Unions in the industries for which it caters.

Although there remains a host of small metal-working trades of which no mention has been made, this list is already long enough. It remains to observe that, in general, the minor metal trades are still weakly organised, above all among women workers, who now number about 450,000 in the whole metal-working group. The failure to organise the less skilled men and women in the growing mass-production branches of the vehicle and minor metal trades, despite the traditional strength of the craft Unions among the skilled workers, plainly indicates the need for new methods, better calculated than those hitherto employed to build up Trade Unionism on an inclusive basis in each big establishment. The craftsmen, in face of the continued advance of mechanisation, can by no means afford to leave organisation among the less skilled

workers in its present state of weakness and confusion; but it is evident that success will hardly be achieved until the craft Unions are able to sink their differences and pool their resources in a common effort towards comprehensive organisation of the metal-working industries on mainly industrial unionist lines.

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE IRON AND
STEEL INDUSTRY

by

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TRADE UNIONISM in the iron and steel trades has a fairly long history. No doubt the Associated Fraternity of Ironworkers of 1830 was the forerunner of other ephemeral organisations; but it was not until 1863 that the North of England Ironworkers—the first Union in the trade to have a continuous existence—was formed. Four years later this Union had developed into the Amalgamated Ironworkers' Association, an organisation national in character, of which John Kane was elected general secretary. Kane had been active in the Chartist and other progressive movements, and had made an abortive attempt to establish a Union in the iron trade in 1842. An outstanding figure in later Trade Union activities, he was connected with the famous Junta.

The formation of the North of England Union was followed by demands for wage-increases and improved conditions. The employers met these in the customary manner of the time, by a general lock-out. The year following (1866) the Union retaliated with a strike which lasted many months. The loss involved led some of the more far-sighted employers in the North of England to consider whether methods of negotiation through joint conciliation machinery would not prove of greater mutual

advantage. Kane had for some years advocated arbitration in industrial disputes, which was also the Junta's policy.

The result was that in March 1869 there was established the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration for the North of England Iron Trade, covering Durham, Northumberland and the North Riding. This was the forerunner of the various forms of joint machinery which have become a traditional feature of the iron and steel industry.

The time when Kane established his Union was one of change in the industry. The inventions of Bessemer, Siemens, and others, were bringing steel into prominence as a serious competitor of malleable iron. Employers in the steel trade adopted many of the unsatisfactory arrangements still existing in the iron trade, particularly contracting and sub-contracting in the works, and excessive week-end and Sunday labour. Bad conditions led to general dissatisfaction. The first signs of revolt were in Scotland, where a strike took place against a proposed reduction of 20 per cent in wages, and also of the number of men on melting furnaces. The men, who were unorganised, were defeated; but the result was the formation of the British Steel Smelters' Association in 1886, and John Hodge, who had experience of both iron-puddling and steel melting, and had been prominent in the dispute, was appointed secretary.

Mr. Hodge had no intention of confining the organisation to Scotland, and within six months he, assisted by Donald Galbraith, was arranging meetings in the North of England, and soon had a membership of over two thousand. In the year following, branches were established in other parts of England and Wales.

Having established the Melters' Union, Mr. Hodge was invited to organise millmen also. His idea was to combine the two, but this did not find favour. Consequently a separate organisation—the Scottish Millmen's Union—was formed, and this became the Amalgamated Society of Steel and Iron Workers. While it remained Scottish in extent, its activities were widened to cover every section

in the industry except steel melters. The other sections included blastfurnacemen, malleable iron workers, and finishing trades such as steel tubes and nuts and bolts.

In England and Wales Mr. Hodge enrolled both steel millmen and melters, and later, when tinplate millmen were added as well as blastfurnacemen in North Wales, the Union's name was changed to the British Steel Smelters', Mill, Iron, and Tinplate Workers' Association. On the other hand, the Amalgamated Ironworkers' Association included men employed in sheet-rolling mills—known as the Staffordshire Sheet Trade—a trade which later spread to South Wales. The name of this Union was then changed to the Associated Iron and Steel Workers of Great Britain.

In the same year that the Scottish Millmen's Union was formed a dispute at Darlington brought into being another steel millmen's Union on the North-East Coast—subsequently called the National Steelworkers' Association, Engineering and Labour League. This Union spread to some works in Sheffield, and had a small membership in Monmouthshire, but it never assumed a national character. Other local Unions were formed in the closing years of the nineteenth century; but, with the exception of the Amalgamated Wiredrawers' Society of Great Britain—a distinctly craft Union organising labour in rod and wire mills—they have ceased to exist.

The expansion of the steel trade necessitated changes in the process of pig-iron production, and developments in blastfurnace practice took place. Kane appears to have had similar ideas of organisation to John Hodge, and in 1873 he organised the Cleveland blastfurnacemen. But after a few years' connection with the Ironworkers' Union, the blastfurnacemen became dissatisfied and decided to form a Blastfurnacemen's Union. This, however, was confined to the Cleveland district, and in subsequent developments of Trade Unionism among blastfurnacemen the practice of district organisation was followed, Unions being formed in Cumberland, the Midlands, and South

Wales and Monmouthshire. Later these formed the National Federation of Blastfurnacemen.

Another important section, the tinplate trade, has a somewhat eventful Trade Union record. Local Unions in this trade existed early in the nineteenth century, and the Wolverhampton tinplaters secured a schedule of piecework rates about 1845. In 1871 William Lewis (Lewys Afan) established the National Amalgamated Tinplate Workers' Association, and was the recognised leader for many years. The Union, however, paid no friendly benefits but was for trade protection purposes only. It was never strong, and while the 1874 Wages List was established during its life-time, by 1887 it had ceased to exist. By that time conditions had changed and steel sheets had taken the place of iron sheets for tinning. A new Union was formed, the South Wales, Monmouth and Gloucester Tinplate Workers' Union. The struggles of the new Union during its existence, which terminated in 1898, were mostly centred on the maintenance of the 1874 List. On the dissolution of the Union, John Hodge's organisation, which had hitherto refused to accept tinplate workmen and had proposed amalgamation, decided to enrol them, and the majority of the millmen joined up. A number of old members, however, desired to maintain an independent body and formed the Tin and Sheet Millmen's Association. The men in the tinhouse or finishing end of the trade joined a special section of the Dockers' Union, and what was then known as the Gasworkers' Union (now the National Union of General and Municipal Workers) enrolled a number of other workers. Between the four Unions at least 85 per cent of the men in the trade had been organised. This was followed by the formation of an association by the employers and the setting up of the Tinplate Joint Conciliation Board.

The foregoing narrative brings us to the position of Trade Unionism in the iron and steel industry as it stood in 1914. Subsequent developments largely revolve around the formation of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation.

The duplication of Unions in the industry had created a serious obstacle to effective organisation, a position accentuated by competition from general labour Unions. The weakness of that position became very evident as the war progressed and the Government took control of the industry.

The British Steel Smelters' Union had for some years endeavoured to secure amalgamation, and many futile discussions took place. The single exception was an amalgamation in 1912 between the Steel Smelters and the National Amalgamated Society of Enginemen, Cranemen, Boilermen, Firemen and Electrical Workers, an organisation formed in 1889 and made up of men engaged in driving engines, cranes and locomotives in steel works, principally on the North-East Coast; coke workers in Cumberland; platers' helpers in shipyards on the coast, and dockworkers in Scotland. The British Steel Smelters, having adopted the policy of industrial unionism, discontinued organisation in the shipyards and docks, and later, as the Cumberland cokeworkers were more closely attached to mines than to iron and steel works, they were transferred to the Miners' Federation.

The difficulty of conducting business with the Government became evident to all concerned, and in December 1915 a conference was called to consider amalgamation. It was attended by practically all the Unions in the industry, and as regards the representative organisations general agreement was found on the question of amalgamation. A special committee was set up to consider the legal difficulties of amalgamation, and it succeeded in evolving a scheme of confederation which could be carried out under the power possessed by the Unions in their rules.

The scheme provided for the establishment of a new Union, the British Iron Steel and Kindred Trades Association (termed the Central Association), and in addition another body, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation; the Executive Council of the Confederation to consist of representatives *pro rata* of the executives of the

amalgamating Unions, including the Central Association. From the date of amalgamation the existing Unions were to cease organising members, or the reinstatement of lapsed members, these to be organised into the Central Association. Further provision was made for membership of the existing Unions to transfer to the Central Association, a transfer fee to be paid in each case, the transferred members carrying with them their past Trade Union membership and becoming immediately entitled to the benefits provided under the rules of the Central Association, which were based upon the rules of the various Unions. All trade questions affecting wages and conditions and the conduct of Joint Boards and negotiation machinery were vested in the Confederation; also the provision of legal services. Otherwise the Unions continued their separate identity, their principal function, however, being the administration of friendly benefits. The scheme provided for the Confederation taking over the whole of the officials of the amalgamating Unions, who, as regards secretarial staff, continued to hold the official positions in their old Unions. Their salaries were payable by the Confederation, and in matters of general trade policy they were subject to the Executive Council of the Confederation. The Confederation was divided into geographical divisions and the officers of the Unions assigned to official posts at either the head or the divisional offices.

Affiliations with the T.U.C. and with the international Trade Union organisations were transferred to the Confederation, while affiliation to the political Labour Party was left with the Unions. The scheme was ultimately adopted, and the following Unions carried out a vote of their membership upon it:—

	<i>Membership</i>
The British Steel Smelters, Mill, Iron, and Tinplate Workers	40,000
The Assocd. Iron and Steel Workers of Great Britain	9,000
The Amalg. Society of Steel and Iron Workers	10,000
The Nat. Steelworkers' Assn., Engineering and Labour League	3,000
The Tin and Sheet Millmen's Association	3,000

The Blastfurnacemen's Federation, which had assisted in drawing up the scheme, failed to submit it to its membership, the reason given being that as it was a federation of district Unions it should first effect a closer union of its component parts. That step was taken later, but the National Union of Blastfurnacemen thus formed has up to the present remained outside the Confederation.

The Amalgamated Society of Steel and Iron Workers and the Tin and Sheet Millmen's Association failed to carry the scheme, but the other three Unions which secured substantial majorities in favour went ahead, and the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation came into being in January 1917.

The result exceeded expectations and many men who had belonged to none of the existing Unions joined the Confederation. As the months passed, the membership of the confederated Unions saw that no useful purpose was being served by separate organisations, and the numerous transfers to the Central Association so attenuated the membership of the old Unions that it was decided to take a vote on complete amalgamation. This was carried, the process being much facilitated by the passing of the Trade Union (Amalgamation) Act, 1917, and by the end of 1918 the Unions which formed the Confederation had become merged in the new association.

In September 1919 the Scottish organisation, the Amalgamated Society of Steel and Iron Workers, took another vote on joining the Confederation, which was carried, and complete amalgamation followed. The Tin and Sheet Millmen's Association did not link up until 1921.

The value of confederation was seen not only in the more satisfactory relations with the Government during the closing years of the war and the subsequent securing of a universal eight-hour day throughout the industry, but also in protecting agreements as to wages and conditions during the post-war depression.

The position today is that the Confederation, which is an industrial Union and strictly confined to workpeople

employed in the iron and steel trades, has some 92,000 members and is representative of every section in the industry. A demarcation agreement on Cokeworkers exists between the Confederation and the National Union of Blastfurnacemen (membership 14,000) which organises men on blastfurnace plants throughout the English districts and in South Wales and Monmouthshire. The Confederation organises workpeople employed on all types of steel melting furnaces and in the various forms of heavy and light rolling mills and forges throughout the country.

In addition to the three distinctly iron and steel trades organisations now existing—the Confederation, the Blastfurnacemen's Union and the Amalgamated Wire Drawers Union—there remain Unions of the 'general labour' type who have membership in the industry. In pre-war days these were fairly numerous and competed actively with each other for members and also with the definitely iron and steel organisations. By amalgamation the number has been reduced, and only three such Unions now operate within the industry. The chief of these is the Transport and General Workers' Union which represents workpeople in the finishing departments principally of the tinplate trade and similar departments of the galvanised sheet trade. The Union is represented on the Tinplate and Welsh Sheet Trades Joint Industrial Council. In connection with the galvanising section of the sheet trade it has its separate joint board for negotiating with the employers on behalf of its members. Friction between the three distinctly iron and steel trade Unions and the Transport and General Workers' Union is avoided to a great extent, particularly as regards the Confederation, by the existence of joint machinery for discussion and settlement of any difference which cannot be settled by the local representatives of the two organisations.

Another Union operating in the iron and steel trades is the Amalgamated Enginemmen, Cranemen and Electrical Workers' Union, which originally was occupational in

character and catered for men engaged in the driving of mechanical plant irrespective of trade or industry, but has in recent years adopted a general labour policy and organises workpeople on coke plants and elsewhere irrespective of their occupation. This Union is now attached to the Power Section of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Finally, the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, which recently took over the Artisans' Union, a small South Wales organisation with members principally among artisans and mechanics, is represented on the Tinsplate Joint Industrial Council. It also has a membership on a number of blastfurnaces in the Midlands area and a certain number of men among the Sheffield Trades which are more closely connected with the engineering industry.

It should be added that as regards men engaged in plant upkeep, such as fitters, bricklayers, and similar occupations, many of these are connected with the various craft Unions.

On the whole, the iron and steel industry is well organised and there is a good Trade Union spirit based upon long traditions of Trade Unionism.

ENGINEERS AND SHIPBUILDERS

ENGINEERING AND SHIPBUILDING Trade Unions have a good deal in common. Here we enter upon a type of industry which has long been dominated by craft Unions of skilled workers who have learnt their trades by long apprenticeship, usually of five or seven years. Some of these Unions, such as the Amalgamated Engineering Union, have opened their ranks to less skilled workers, in face of the rapid growth of semi-skilled operations which threaten to destroy their monopoly. But even where this has been done, the Unions remain under the effective control of the skilled craftsmen.

The A.E.U. can be taken as typical of the large number of craft Unions in the engineering and shipbuilding trades. It is organised in branches which have no necessary connection with the members' places of employment. In important centres there are often numerous branches of the A.E.U.; and additional branches are founded as membership increases. The branches, however, have no important industrial functions, except the proposal of candidates for membership, which needs national approval. The branches deal chiefly with friendly benefits, whereas industrial functions are in the hands of District Committees representing all the branches in a particular town or centre. On these committees there usually sit also a few representatives of the shop stewards, who are appointed for each establishment by the District Committee, for the purpose of enrolling members and seeing that Trade Union payments are kept up to date, and of reporting to the committee on conditions in the establishment. The

Mr

shop stewards, however, are not as a rule empowered to negotiate on behalf of the Union; nor do they usually form a Shop or Works Committee of the same type as those which existed during the war. In fact, the multiplicity of Unions in the engineering trades often results in the existence of a number of unco-ordinated shop stewards representing different Unions; and in times of trade depression it is often difficult to find men willing to serve as stewards; so that on occasion, where organisation is weak, the entire shop steward system lapses in a particular factory.

Craft Unions have as one of their principal purposes the protection of their respective crafts from encroachments either by less skilled workers or by members of kindred crafts. Disputes between skilled craftsmen concerning the 'right' to do a particular job, or to work a particular machine, are called 'demarcation disputes'; and there is usually some recognised procedure for settling them. But the skilled crafts, while they are usually ready to arbitrate on disputes one with another, do not accept the right of less skilled workers to similar treatment. Subject to continual encroachment on skilled work through the improvement of automatic or semi-automatic machines, they fight a perpetual rearguard action in order to preserve as much work as possible for members of the craft. This often puts difficulties in the way of effective combined bargaining by the craft Unions and the general labour Unions which chiefly enrol the less skilled workers. But in practice the two groups usually contrive to compromise their differences, to the extent of presenting common claims for general improvements in wages and conditions. The skilled men recognise that it is to their interest to secure higher wages for the less skilled, in order to reduce the economy that can be achieved by substituting less skilled workers for themselves; and the less skilled workers realise that they are not strong enough to bargain effectively without the support of the skilled workers.

Each District Committee of the A.E.U. commonly has

a separate agreement with the local employers' association. The Districts are grouped into larger Divisions, for each of which the Union maintains a full-time Organising Delegate; but the Divisions are not bargaining units, but exist mainly for purposes of organisation. The Districts, upon industrial questions, deal directly with the National Executive, which is in the A.E.U. (but in very few other Unions) a full-time body, elected by regional ballot of the members of the Union. Beyond the Executive, however, is a larger body, the National Committee, which consists of members working at their trades. This Committee, which meets annually or when specially summoned, settles broad questions of policy; but extensive use is also made of the ballot vote, which is normally taken in the branches, though exceptionally, on a very important issue, it may be decided to take a postal ballot.

The A.E.U. works under a national agreement with the Engineering Employers' Federation. Changes in wages and conditions are made from time to time nationally, to apply over the country as a whole; but local agreements can be made also, provided that they do not conflict with the nationally agreed terms. Any District which has a local grievance or demand negotiates in the first place with the local employers. If no agreement can be reached, the matter is referred to a national conference between the A.E.U. and the national Employers' Federation. No strike may be called until this procedure has been followed; but if no agreement is reached nationally, either party is free to take action. The District, however, cannot call a strike without the consent of the Executive Council, though the Union machinery includes a Final Appeal Court which sometimes legitimises long afterwards a strike called without the Executive's sanction.

This procedure applies to firms which belong to the Engineering Employers' Federation, covering the main section of the A.E.U.'s membership. But there are also numerous sectional agreements with other bodies of employers for particular classes of work.

The shipyard Trade Unions have a somewhat similar agreement with the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation, while the smaller metal-working crafts largely work together through the Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trade Unions, which also includes the General and Municipal Workers' Union and the Transport and General Workers' Union, representing the less skilled workers.

During the war, the engineering industry was the storm centre of the Trade Union world, and the main field for the activities of the Shop Stewards' Movement. Membership increased enormously; but after the war there followed a very big decline, and the power of the Unions was greatly weakened by unemployment. In face of the over-supply of labour, apprenticeship fell off sharply; and the growth of mass production further diminished both the demand for skilled men and the opportunities for securing an all-round training. In the past year or two, on the other hand, the rearmament campaign has caused a greatly increased demand for skilled labour—for many types of armaments cannot be mass-produced. This has put a premium on skill; and highly skilled men can command good wages. But less skilled labour is still abundant and in many of the lighter branches, such as motor-car manufacture, very badly organised. The numerous women workers in the minor metal trades are, in fact, hardly organised at all. There is accordingly an immense field open for Trade Union expansion; but the craft Union system which prevails so largely in the metal trades is not well adapted for promoting Trade Unionism among the growing mass of less skilled workers. The craftsmen, however, will by no means agree to sink their craft identities in any sort of industrial Union, both because they are intent on preserving their craft privileges and because many of the crafts extend far beyond the engineering and shipbuilding industries, and would be broken up if organisation were to follow strictly industrial instead of craft lines. Industrial Unionism is obviously

preferable for fighting purposes, because it unites all those who work under a common group of employers. But the craftsman is often more interested in special safeguards for his craft monopoly than in creating a fighting organisation on the wider basis of class. Therefore he continues to fight a rearguard action against the development of forms of mass production which gradually obliterate craft distinctions, and reduce the skilled workers to a smaller and smaller fraction of the total numbers employed.

The engineering and minor metal trades, being the field in which mass production has made the greatest advances, are also the happy hunting grounds of the 'scientific management' expert and the efficiency engineer'. Fancy methods of payment and workshop organisation, such as the greatly disliked 'Bedaux' system, have given rise in recent years to many strikes in particular establishments. 'Speeding-up' is much in vogue, especially at the expense of semi-skilled and female labour. There is urgent need for some Union inclusive enough and militant enough to transcend craft boundaries and fight the battle of these classes of workers. But hitherto the craft Unions have shown no readiness to move, except in defence of their own members; and without their help the less skilled groups remain for the most part leaderless.

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE ENGINEERING INDUSTRY

by

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‘ENGINEERING’ MAY DENOTE either an industry or a group of occupations extending over many industries. As an industry it may be held to include, besides the general engineering works and the foundries and forges producing largely for them, the Government and railway engineering establishments, the majority of electrical manufacturing establishments, and the firms engaged in the making of vehicles and scientific instruments and tools. In this sense the industry had a total labour force of $1\frac{1}{4}$ millions in 1933, rising to over $1\frac{1}{2}$ millions in 1937.

Occupationally, engineering covers a wider field—probably nearly $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions. Most of the engineering processes are found in other industries also—notably those related to the maintenance of machinery. Trade Union organisation, being largely on a craft basis, follows the occupation rather than the industry; and the larger total is therefore the more relevant to the Trade Union problem as a whole. In this essay, however, consideration is given mainly to the industry, and such problems as relate to engineering workers in other industries are only touched on. It appears that the membership of the Unions catering for these occupations stood at approximately 1,022,000 at December 1922, fell to 806,000 in 1929, dropped again to 735,000 in 1931, and had risen to approximately

960,000 in 1937. So about 34 per cent of the workers in the occupations in question had been organised in 1931, and by the end of 1937, about 39 per cent. To get similar figures for the industry as opposed to the occupation, ship-building operatives have been included and this has been compared with the aggregate membership of twenty Unions substantially interested in these trades. The membership totalled 615,000 approximately in 1922, 438,600 in 1929, 405,300 in 1935, and 532,500 in 1937. About 20.2 per cent of the total operatives, then, were members of these twenty Unions in 1936. By 1937 this figure had risen to 32.7 per cent.

The Trade Unions which share this membership number some sixty. Of these, however, eight cater for workers not employed in the industry but belonging to crafts strongly represented in it. The Unions differ strikingly in type and size. Our basis for classification is the membership of each Union in occupations substantially found in the industry and not in its total membership. From this standpoint, the Amalgamated Engineering Union is the only true example of an 'industrial' Union. There are three Unions which enrol those employed by a particular employer, e.g. The National Union of Railwaymen. The United Society of Boilermakers represents eleven Unions catering for a group of occupations. Sixteen Unions cater for workers in a particular (generally a skilled) occupation—e.g. The National Society of Coppersmiths. Six Unions cater for workers in a section of the industry, e.g. The National Union of Scalemakers. Some thirteen enrol workers in certain materials, such as wood or brass. Ten Unions, mainly in Scotland, draw their membership from certain geographical areas. This classification can only be tentative. For example, a Union may organise skilled and semi-skilled workers in certain occupations in the brass or wood group, and so have affinities with more than one type.

Wide variations in size are also found. Of forty-five Unions in the industry proper, only one at the end of 1937

had over 300,000 members, one over 100,000 and two over 50,000. Six had over 20,000, five had over 10,000, fifteen over 1,000, and one-third of them had less than 1,000 members.

Some of these Unions have their main centre outside engineering. The wood-working Unions, with one exception, have bigger interests in other industries—building, carriage and cart construction, furniture, shipbuilding, maintenance work in numbers of grades. The Unions catering for enginemmen have members scattered throughout other industries. The plumbers and heating and ventilating engineers find their centres of gravity outside engineering. The Electrical Trades Union, which caters for all workers engaged in the manufacture, installation and repair of electrical plant and apparatus, covers electrical engineering, electrical cables and apparatus, ship-building, building and contracting, electricity generation and supply, and again maintenance work. The United Society of Boiler-makers has organised many workers, skilled and semi-skilled, in the locomotive, boiler and tank and steelwork erection sections of engineering. But its main interests must be in the shipbuilding industry. The Constructional Engineering Union, by reason of its membership outside the engineering shops, is affiliated to the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives. The two General Workers' Unions, which have about 50,000 members in the industry, are of great importance in that they organise the women workers.

The Amalgamated Engineering Union is one of six Unions properly belonging to the industry, representing the shops or departments generally found in an engineering works. In 1851, seven Unions amalgamated to form the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, which, in turn, amalgamated with nine Unions in 1920 to form the present A.E.U. It has faced many bitter struggles characterised by relatively frequent large-scale lock-outs. The 5,000 members of 1851 had by 1920 become 459,987. With the post-war slump, the 1922 lock-out, and the depression

of the following years membership declined steadily until the middle of 1928. The decline was accelerated in 1931, and continued to the middle of 1933. Since then, however, all the ground lost since the end of 1922 has been recovered. At the end of 1937 the figures stood at 331,953 compared with 191,539 in 1933; 221,529 in 1929; and 333,123 in 1922. The old A.S.E. at its inception took in men who had served a defined apprenticeship in the skilled trades of blacksmith, fitter, turner, patternmaker and millwright. Later, new skilled trades were included, and from the 1880's provision was made for the less skilled machine tool operators, though a minimum period of service at the trade and a minimum wage rate was required. Early in the present century new trades were added, the list of qualifications was reduced, and from 1912 to 1916 a special section for labourers was in existence. In 1926, however, the A.E.U. became a fully industrial Union. Today it covers a wide range of occupations, although approximately 85 per cent of its membership are fitters, turners, millwrights and machinists—who form about a third of the workers in the industry. The A.E.U. had organised in 1931 nearly 27 per cent of these classes, and by 1937 perhaps 40 per cent. Nearly one-tenth of the members are Colonial, since the A.E.U. is one of the few remaining Unions with members outside the United Kingdom. Less than one-tenth are in industries other than engineering.

The National Union of Foundry Workers, also a product of the post-war amalgamation movement, was formed by three Unions in 1922. Membership (55,760 in 1920) declined without a break until 1934, but by the end of 1937 had risen to over 30,000 compared with 21,860 in 1932; 27,776 in 1929; and 46,000 in 1922. It has some five rivals in the foundry group, the National Union of Stove, Grate and General Workers being the largest. The N.U.F.W. has interests in other foundry trades, notably the light castings and shipbuilding. Sheet metal workers, another important group, are catered for by the National Union of Sheet Metal Workers, and a number of smaller

Unions, such as the Birmingham and Midland S.M.W. Society The N.U.S.M.W. was formed in 1921 as the result of the merging of ten bodies. Membership has been remarkably constant—perhaps as a result of its compact craft basis. This Union has a number of workers in the domestic hollow-ware and kindred trades. Pattern-makers are catered for mainly by the United Pattern-makers' Association, formed in 1872, and interested in all trades where foundry and specialised woodworking is present. Here, too, membership is remarkably constant. Coppersmiths, whose trade is highly skilled, are principally enrolled by the National Society of Coppersmiths (founded in 1846). The Associated Blacksmith and Smithy Workers (founded 1857) had 22,848 members in 1920, but, despite increases since 1933, has now only a few over 8,400, some of them in the steel industry and domestic jobbing trade. The National Society of Brass and Metal Mechanics (founded 1872) had 37,363 members in 1920, but only a few over 15,000 in 1937; it has enrolled members not only in the brass-working shops of the industry, but also in the brass-finishing trade and, for historical reasons, in aircraft works.

The predominant employers' organisation is the Engineering and Allied Employers' National Federation, founded in 1896, and now numbering over 1,800 firms. Wage charges in several light metal trades are strongly influenced by the Federation's agreements. It is with this body, its fifty odd local associations, and such constituent bodies as the Federated Admiralty Contractors that the Unions negotiate. Disputes are first dealt with in the 'shop' and then, if not settled, at Works' Conferences, at Local Conferences and finally Central Conferences. As a last resource, outside 'Procedure' are Composite Conferences. Disputes covering a locality go from Local Conferences to Central Conferences, except wage claims of the most comprehensive type, which go to a special variety of Central Conference. National claims are discussed at special meetings of the Federation and the Unions—largely

a product of war-time developments. Strong criticism of the 'Procedure' has led to several conferences with the Federation since 1934. The main grievances are the time taken for negotiation; the inability of Union officials to negotiate in the 'shop' in the first place; obstacles in the way of a Shop Stewards' and Works' Committee, and the introduction of certain changes by the employers while the 'Procedure' is in operation. Time limits for certain stages were set up in the 1896-1914 period, but no alterations have since occurred. Precisely the same can be said of the place of Union officials in the 'Procedure'. The provision for Shop Stewards' and Works' Committees was the direct result of war-time developments, but their non-compulsory character has remained to the present time. The last of these grievances has probably been most felt; the Agreements of 1898 and 1907 stipulated the *status quo* on the part of both parties pending fulfilment of 'Procedure', but apart from slight concessions in 1922 the clause has been dropped.

Outside the Federation lie the separate bargaining arrangements of firms in certain areas, of the railway companies, the Government and ship repair firms. In the first group come local associations in Portsmouth and Wolverhampton. The railway companies agreed in 1927 with thirty-six Unions upon negotiating machinery similar in many ways to that of the Federation, but making special provision for workers in small 'shops' and for detached bodies of men. Government establishments are generally under Whitley machinery, comprising Works Councils, Departmental Industrial Councils, and, grouping the latter, Trade Joint Councils. Dockyard workers have a number of special Committees, while certain Departments at Woolwich, Enfield and Waltham, have a Shop Stewards scheme and are independent of the Whitley machinery. In ship repair local negotiations largely prevail, the Employers' Associations being affiliated to the E.A.E.N.F., or the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation, or remaining independent.

Arrangements in other industries are various. In Shipping there is the appropriate Panel of the National Maritime Board; in Electricity Supply there is Whitley machinery; in Gas the A.E.U. has an agreement with the Federation of Gas Employers; and in Chemicals the A.E.U. and other Unions have important agreements with I.C.I., Ltd. In Iron and Steel there is local negotiation only.

What are the leading problems of the Unions today? Remuneration is most frequently built up of base rate, piece-work earnings and war bonus. The base rate is largely negotiated on a District basis. The first extensive changes since 1920 were recorded in 1936 and 1937. Piece-work is no longer opposed except by the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers. Issues such as the 'Debt system' still remain, and day-to-day disputes over piece prices, etc., are frequent—they accounted for nearly a sixth of the strikes involving the A.E.U. between June 1935 and December 1937. War bonus—product of war-time bargaining—is negotiated nationally. While there have been three increases since 1935, there is strong feeling that it should be consolidated in wages.

The dispute between employers and Unions as to the class of labour which should man certain machine tools forms the 'Machine Question'. It is the policy of the skilled workers' Unions generally to peg rates for such machines at a definite percentage of the rates for machines manned by skilled workers—so compelling the employer to man them with certain grades of labour. When a grade is placed on a machine normally manned by a more skilled class, serious disputes occur. Nearly a quarter of the strikes involving the A.E.U. in the period analysed were directed against 'dilution'. Over a seventh of these concerned dismissals, there being generally a belief that the dismissals affected the more active Trade Unionists. Open hostility towards the Unions is rarely found inside the E.A.E.N.F., but occasionally outside it. On the other hand, feeling against the employment of non-Unionists has revived in recent months. 1937 saw two important

successes. Some years of pressure, events abroad and the publicising of the issue resulted in the achievement of Holidays with Pay. Secondly, the right to negotiate for boys and youths was largely obtained after an extensive strike movement carried out by the boys and youths themselves. Such strikes accounted for nearly a seventh of those analysed, and were easily the largest. Other movements have been less successful. The shorter working week campaign has hung fire since the depression ended. But the likely coincidence of full-time working in some sections of the industry with short-time working and unemployment in others, may raise the issue sharply in the near future. Again, while demarcation and membership disputes have appreciably lessened since 1920, closer unity is still a big problem. The Conference convened in 1937 by the A.E.U. to discuss Amalgamation failed. The newly created Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions is more powerful than the old Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades. But the divergent interests of Unions only partially interested in the industry and Unions whose membership is substantially in the industry, have prevented important affiliations to the Confederation and led to friction inside the broader Engineering Trades joint movement. Finally, there are many problems of a wider nature. In the new branches of the industry—motors, aircraft, electrical apparatus—mass production has induced an occupational, age and sex composition of the labour force largely alien to the older branches. Organisation has become more difficult, too, in such industries as Coal Mining, Iron and Steel and Railway Transport, where Industrial Unionism has spread, and where only a strong alliance of the craftsmen's Unions can maintain their legitimate rights.

In the industry direct State action by legislation and Ministerial Order has been conspicuously rare. Yet it was not difficult for the engineering workers to understand the responsibility of the State's war-time policy for the great shift in the relationship of skilled to unskilled, male to

female worker manifest afterwards, or to see that the true cause of the 'Managerial Functions' lock-out in 1922 was the general reaction against the great growth in labour's status between 1914 and 1920. The interest of such Unions as the A.E.U. in the U.S.S.R., both as a Socialist State and as a market, has frequently clashed with the class-conscious shortsightedness of Conservative opinion. Between 1932 and 1936, however, interest in political issues as expressed by politically affiliated membership, failed to keep pace with increasing total membership.

Fortunately, this position is now changing. The fate of the Spanish Republic, as of the U.S.S.R. in 1917-1922, has become of vital importance to the Unions. Through Rearmament, the State has created a revolution in aircraft manufacture, bringing great changes in a labour force more than trebly expanded since 1935. Today it is advancing towards that type of control which it exercised over the industry as a whole between 1914 and 1918. With the experience of those years behind them, the Engineering Unions must, and will, put their point of view on such a policy clearly and firmly.

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE PRINTING
INDUSTRY

by

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TRADE UNIONISM in the printing industry has a long history. 'Every Printing House', said a writer in 1683, 'is, by the Custom of Time out of mind, called a Chappel, and all the Workmen that belong to it are Members of the Chappel; and the oldest Freeman is Father of the Chappel.' The Chapel, now in existence in every printing office for each separate section in the industry, remains a vital institution, and plays an important part in fixing working rules and implementing agreements made between the Unions and the employers. The Chapel, in time, made Trade-Union organisation easier to achieve; even as early as 1666 we hear of a petition from the journeymen printers of London, complaining of the unemployment caused by the number of new apprentices taken on. The first associations, as usual in those days, were spasmodic and ephemeral, principally because the law seemed especially harsh against all combinations of work-people. At last, however, in 1835, when the whole movement was at a low ebb, the London compositors reorganised themselves, adopted a programme covering wages, hours, and limitation of the number of apprentices, and thus laid the foundations for the future development and success of printing Trade Unionism.

At the present time (1938) there are seventeen Unions in the Printing Industry, with a membership of 205,082. Each body enjoys complete autonomy in its particular sphere

except where disputes may involve other Unions. Such matters, and questions of hours and holidays, have to be referred to the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation.

The Compositors have the longest record of continuous organisation, reaching well back into the eighteenth century. As early as 1844 a National Typographical Association was founded, but it did not last long. In 1849 the Provincial Typographical Association was formed by the absorption of local societies, some of which had been in existence for many years—the Manchester society since 1797. This body is now called the Typographical Association (membership 36,000). The tradition of local autonomy remains strong; and not until 1919 were local agreements replaced by a national agreement. The branches still retain their local rules, with varying local customs and benefits, in addition to those paid by the parent body. The Association embraces compositors (including operators), readers, machine-minders, and mono-casters employed all over England, excluding London.

London has a tradition of separate organisation. The London Union of Compositors founded in 1834 as the latest of a line of societies dating back to 1770 joined the National Typographical Association. But the London men seceded in 1848 and formed the London Society of Compositors—a body which has since been foremost in its efforts to improve the status and conditions of its members and has established a reputation that is the envy of the Trade-Union movement. The amount returned to members in benefits provides a most remarkable example of service. It has already reached the figure of nearly five and a half million pounds—paid largely in unemployment and superannuation benefits. The present membership is about 14,000. There is also a Scottish Typographical Association (membership 6,900), which was founded in 1853 after the collapse of the National Typographical Association.

The largest Union in the printing industry is the National Union of Printing, Bookbinding, and Paper Workers

(membership 85,000), which organises, in addition to printers' warehousemen and packers, papermakers and bookbinders, the staffs of publishers and wholesale news-agents. It was established in 1921 as an amalgamation of two Unions—the National Union of Bookbinders and Machine Rulers (itself an amalgamation, formed in 1911 of three societies, which dated back respectively to 1850, 1823, and 1784), and the National Union of Printing and Paper Workers (also an amalgamation of three Unions), formed in 1914.

The printing operatives are largely enrolled in the National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants (membership nearly 27,000), which takes all persons—skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled—who work in the industry and are ineligible for the recognised craft Unions. When it was founded in 1889 as the National Society of Operative Printers' Assistants, labourers in the industry were receiving as little, in some instances, as 15s. for a 54-hour week; but now they have been brought up to a level much nearer the craftsmen, and Natsopa has become one of the largest and most virile printing Unions.

Space does not permit of a description of all the smaller Unions in the trade, such as the Lithographic Printers, Lithographic Artists, Printing Machine Managers, Electrotypers and Stereotypers, and the small but highly skilled Correctors of the Press, together with some others which have memberships ranging upwards from a few hundreds. Mention should, however, be made of the National Union of Journalists (membership over 6,600) which was established in 1907 as a rival to the Institute of Journalists, which is not a Trade Union. The Society of Women employed in the Bookbinding and Printing Trades (membership 2,486: established 1896) is the only separate women's Union in the industry.

Mention must also be made of a number of small organisations which played a peculiar part in London towards the end of the last century. They were termed 'Gifts' and were organisations of members of the

compositors' Trade Union formed for the purpose of securing employment and additional provident benefits. There were at one time many of these bodies, and undoubtedly they constituted 'wheels within wheels', the members meeting to agree upon Trade-Union policy, which they were sometimes able to influence by their block vote. So powerful did they become that certain printing offices became known as 'Gift Houses'—it being impossible to secure employment therein unless one belonged to the particular Gift. Their effect was officially examined in 1893, when a committee reported that the charges made against them had been exaggerated. It was shown that the work and methods of these small organisations had exercised a beneficial influence on the well-being of the parent society, and that the growth of the latter had rendered them ineffective except for provident purposes. There are still many of them in existence—mainly for charitable purposes and for providing additional unemployment benefits.

All the Unions pay the usual Trade-Union benefits, and on a very generous scale—the provident benefit being in some instances as much as £2 10s. per week, exclusive of State Benefit, while superannuation benefit varies from 7s. 6d. to £2 a week. In 1937 the grand total of payments made, through the parent bodies and the various branches, exceeded £750,000—of which more than half was for superannuation. These high benefits necessarily involve large contributions—in some instances amounting to 12s. 6d. a week, and these amounts are willingly subscribed. Many people believe that work of this character is not the proper sphere of a Trade Union, and that Unions should exist simply as fighting organisations. But it is unquestionable that each worker in the printing industry has so large a stake in his Union that his loyalty is certain. Once a person is elected he does not lapse his membership, as often happens in bad times with Unions which do not make service to their members a cardinal point in their programme. It is worth remembering that only 9 per cent

of those who are eligible for National Health Insurance belong to Trade Union Approved Societies, and that Friendly Societies have a voluntary membership of about eight millions. Were the social side more widespread in the Trade-Union movement, it is reasonable to assume that the bulk of this number could be enlisted.

Another example of the service rendered to those engaged in the industry is the wonderful philanthropic work that is done, securing its finance from the generous support of employers and employees alike. We can instance Natsopa's magnificent Memorial Home with Homes for Aged Workers in Leicestershire, and the two splendid Convalescent Homes at Filey and Hastings owned by the Paperworkers for the exclusive use of their own members, while the Caxton Convalescent Home at Limpsfield, Surrey, the Lloyd Memorial Home at Deal, and the Hermitage Convalescent Home at Hastings are open to members of all the Trade Unions. In addition the Printers' Medical Aid Association provides surgical, dental, and optical treatment with specialist advice, while the Printers' Pension Corporation helps to bring comfort in old age and also attends to the maintenance and education of orphans.

In 1919 the Joint Industrial Council was formed, and has functioned very effectively since that date. Its many and varied objects are all framed in an endeavour to promote co-operation and the recognition of mutual interests on both sides. Drastic action must not be taken by either side until the question in dispute has been referred to the J.I.C. Neither party is bound to accept the findings; but such is the moral effect that this is usually the end of the matter. All over the country District Committees have been formed, and their friendly meetings have done much to promote the good will of all concerned.

Political representation has been strongly developed in the industry, and all the large Unions are affiliated to the Labour Party.

Towards the close of the last century it became apparent that the printing Unions needed some connecting link to

ensure satisfactory progress. For many years the craft Unions had maintained their exclusiveness, while the unskilled and semi-skilled workers had been left to fend for themselves until in 1889 they began to organise with the assistance of the more active-minded members of the craft organisations. The realisation of interdependence arose from the employers' action in playing off one Union against another, and also from the fact that, if one Union became involved in a dispute, all the others were bound to be affected. Although the idea of amalgamation was to the fore, it was confined to the more advanced members; but the urgency of securing cohesion was much more generally recognised, and this was seen to be possible only through federation. In 1890 the craft Unions formed the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation, welcoming into their ranks a few years later the comparatively newly formed semi-skilled Unions. The efforts of the first officers seem to have been confined to maintaining the autonomy of each constituent society, even while they expressed their belief that a successful Federation would 'prove a stepping-stone to the greater union of the forces of labour'.

Many felt that the Federation could never attain the intimate understanding which the executive committee of a society had of its members' needs. Particular agreements and regulations concerning benefits, etc., might, it was feared, clash with those of another craft within the Federation. Even in the printing industry there are a number of factors which create differences in outlook and make what seems a simple problem one of great complexity. Wages, subscriptions and benefits differ, and—what is of extreme importance—the incidence of unemployment varies most of all. It is the Federation's work to adjust these differences, but the small Union is always somewhat chary of giving it too much power lest its own peculiar problems should be submerged. Not until 1909 was the Federation given power to negotiate with the employers for a 48-hour week. The failure of the negotiations was followed by a long and costly struggle on the part of the

London Unions, during which the Federation accepted responsibility for paying dispute benefit. Incidentally, the struggle brought into existence the *Daily Herald*, which began as a strike sheet issued by the London Society of Compositors. In 1911 the Federation secured an agreement for reduced hours for the provincial Unions, and this was the first national agreement on the question of working hours in the industry.

In 1912 the Federation discussed the possibility of amalgamating all the Unions in the industry. After a lengthy discussion regarding general versus sectional amalgamation it was resolved 'that this meeting is of opinion that all the Societies should amalgamate into one National Union. This and other proposals were sent to affiliated Unions for instructions for future conferences. For better or worse, the replies left no doubt as to the impossibility of making any progress on a scheme of general amalgamation. A subsequent attempt to amalgamate the purely letterpress Unions also failed, and recurring efforts have proved no more successful.

In 1912 the Federation appointed a full-time secretary, Mr. A. E. Holmes, who soon justified his appointment. Affiliations increased, and the larger body soon became recognised as the best medium for settling disputes between Unions or with the employers; indeed the employers' federation suggested that unsettled disputes should be referred to both Federations before any aggressive action was taken by either side—a proposal which the Unions did not accept. During the war the Federation was conspicuously successful in safeguarding the Unions' interests.

In 1919 the Federation concluded an agreement for a national 48-hour week, plus one of the greatest boons ever introduced—payment for a week's annual holiday and for all statutory holidays. This agreement is justifiably regarded as the high-water mark of the good understanding which still exists. In 1920 the Federation secured wage advances for those Unions which had agreed to combined action. One Union preferred to conduct its own negotiations and declined to accept a similar offer. After a strike, a similar

advance was accepted, but soon afterwards two large branches of the Union struck for additional wages. The Federation was successful in limiting the dispute to the two areas, but it dragged on for about three months. During this period members of other Unions who were thrown out of employment were paid full wages by their employers, and it is doubtful whether a parallel instance could be found elsewhere in Trade-Union history.

In 1937 the Federation secured an agreement for a national 45-hour week and this was put into operation without any friction on either side—the five-day week being adopted almost universally.

The Federation does not interfere with the Unions' activities unless something arises which is likely to affect other societies: its policy is rather to achieve the closest co-operation among all printing workers and to compose difficulties which arise between Unions. Its successful record will be improved upon as the recent tendency to act in unison on all general movements develops. In addition local federations, grouped in areas, have done much good work, especially in securing that printed matter for public bodies is produced in Trade-Union offices.

A movement for an inclusive Union for the industry, covering all crafts and sections, has many adherents and much to recommend it; but there is a general feeling that the special needs of individual crafts might be overlooked. Even the essential preliminary step of amalgamating allied Unions has proved impossible owing to the clash of interests. Possibly at some future date there may be one Union for the industry, but in the meantime the Federation provides the best machinery for smooth working. There are many who hold that the best form of Trade Unionism lies not in having one big Union but in a form of organisation which enables the workers concerned to discuss the facts relating to their own particular occupation and to determine the value of their services: to form rules suitable to their own interests and the requirements peculiar to their work, and through their own elected representatives to state the case for their

members to the employers. Obviously members will put most trust in an official who understands the processes of their work and is equipped to advise them because he has worked with and graduated among them.

Both employers and workers in the printing industry are well organised; and wages, hours, holiday pay, and conditions of labour are governed by agreements made through either the Federation or the respective Unions. Both sides hold that these matters should be settled by negotiation with a minimum of legislative interference. Only those who are conversant with all phases of the industry should be permitted to deal with this problem.

Closely connected with the desirability of collective agreements is the proposal to give statutory effect to them. There is much to be said for and against this idea. It is certainly deplorable that a minority of employers should jeopardise an agreement reached by mutual negotiation, and, as 100 per cent organisation on both sides has not yet been attained, the industry may have to decide whether other restraining measures should be adopted. The proposal is that employers and employees should be able jointly to request the Minister of Labour to issue a Special Order making enforceable as a minimum any agreement as to wages, workshop conditions, and ratios of apprentices. Such an Order could be revoked on application by either side, or varied on joint application, and there would be penalties for any employer not adhering to its terms. Many believe that this system would be of great value to the industry, but there are others who oppose it.

This short account of the past and present position of printing Trade Unionism provides sufficient evidence that progress is being maintained; but the future of Trade Unionism concerns those outside no less than those inside the movement, and it is to be hoped that, in the near future, the Unions will have such an accession of new members as will enable them to go forward and eventually attain that place in the sun which is the rightful heritage of all who labour.

THE TEXTILE WORKERS

THE TEXTILE TRADES, as a whole, had in 1937 a labour force of about 1,170,000 insured workers, of whom 450,000 were males and 720,000 females. Cotton, despite a rapid fall in employment and production, remained by far the largest group, with over 450,000, exclusive of the workers in the bleaching, dyeing and calico printing trades. The woollen and worsted trades came second, with 240,000—again excluding the dyeing and finishing sections. Hosiery had a labour force of 133,000, and bleaching, dyeing and finishing 100,000. Silk and artificial silk together accounted for 86,000—exclusive of some workers on mixed materials assigned to other branches. Finally, the minor textile trades—lace, jute and flax, hemp, carpet making, and so on—had together 180,000 workers in Great Britain (the figures throughout exclude the Northern Irish textile trades).

Except in the dyeing and finishing trades and in cotton spinning, where men predominate, women workers are in a majority in most branches of the textile industries. In the cotton trades as a whole they outnumber the men by nearly two to one, and in hosiery by not much short of four to one.

Of all women enrolled in Trade Unions of every type, the textile trades account for more than a quarter, and of all women manual workers in Trade Unions for at least one-half. Yet, even in these trades, women are a good deal less highly organised than men. Male Trade Unionists at the end of 1936 numbered 203,000 out of 450,000, or about 45 per cent; female Trade Unionists were 226,000

out of 720,000, or rather over 30 per cent. The dyeing and finishing trades, with their high percentage of male workers, were the best organised section, and the cotton trade easily the next best. The woollen and worsted trades were weakly organised, and so were most of the minor textile groups.

The cotton and woollen and worsted industries are dealt with in subsequent chapters, and here it is only necessary to put in a brief summary account of Trade Unionism in the remaining trades.

Dyeing, bleaching, and other finishing processes are common to a wide group of textile industries; and the Unions in these trades cover workers employed on various textile materials. There were, until recent years, three main Unions—the Amalgamated Dyers, Bleachers and Finishers, concerned with wool, cotton and other textiles, the Bolton Amalgamation of Bleachers, Dyers and Kindred Trades, mainly in cotton, and the National Society of Dyers, mainly in the woollen and worsted trades. But by a series of amalgamations all these societies, together with the former General Union of Textile Workers, the principal Union in the woollen and worsted trades, have been merged into the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers, which thus aims at covering the whole of both industries. Outside this body there remain, as far as dyers and finishers are concerned, only a few very small local societies, mainly in the Midland hosiery trades. However, in the cotton industry the small but skilled United Society of Engravers (2,000) still maintains a separate existence in the calico printing trade.

Hosiery is an industry in which women outnumber men by more than four to one. Trade Unionism is weak, the Unions having only 16,000 members in 1936 out of a labour force of 133,000. Moreover, the Trade Unions are highly localised. There are separate Unions in Nottingham and District, Leicester and District, Hinckley, Loughborough, and Ilkeston, with memberships ranging from 5,000 to a few hundreds, and there are also in some of these places

small separate Unions of 'menders' and 'trimmers'. Repeated efforts have been made to bring about the amalgamation of these small Unions; but local and financial differences have so far prevented fusion. It is, however, plain that the present methods are ineffective, and it may be hoped that before long the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers will be able to bring the hosiery trades as a whole within the scope of a comprehensive amalgamation.

Lace, as contrasted with hosiery, is a declining trade, mainly carried on in Nottingham. There are two local Unions—the Amalgamated Society of Lace Makers (1,500—all males), and the British Lace Operatives' Federation (2,100—about equally divided between men and women). There is also a Scottish Lace Textile Workers' Union (2,250). There are thus about 6,000 Trade Unionists (adding one smaller society) out of about 15,000 workers in the trade.

In the silk trades it is impossible to separate the numbers employed in real and artificial silk, but the two together have about 80,000 insured workers. Workers in artificial silk, except those engaged in weaving mixed fabrics, who may be in the cotton or woollen Unions, are in the general labour Unions, when they are organised at all. The great majority are not in any Union, as the new industry has been developed mainly in areas where Trade Unionism is weak. The real silk trade, centred mainly at Leek and Macclesfield, is represented by the National Association of Silk Workers (2,700), with headquarters at Leek.

The jute and linen trades, excluding Northern Ireland, are centred mainly in Dundee. They employ about 45,000 workers, of whom rather over one-third are males. The Dundee and District Union of Jute and Flax Workers, which is the only important Union in these trades, returned a membership of 8,000 to the Trades Union Congress in 1937, but to the General Federation of Trade Unions one of 11,000. Women are in a very great majority among its

members, the men in these trades being, by way of exception, even less well-organised than the women, though a small number are in other tiny Scottish societies confined to skilled workers.

The carpet trades, centred at Kidderminster and in Scotland, employ rather more than 30,000 workers, women being roughly in the proportion of three to two men. The Kidderminster Power Loom Carpet Weavers' Association has about 4,150 members, with a majority of women. There is also a Scottish Carpet Trade Union with about 1,500 members.

It will be observed that, in a number of the textile trades, there are separate Scottish organisations. The English Unions in the cotton trades and in some of the lesser trades, such as lace, carpets and hosiery, do not extend to Scotland; and while the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers has about 5,600 Scottish members, it does not cover all branches of the woollen and worsted industry. The Scottish Trades Union Congress has an affiliated textile membership of about 20,000; and of this total about 13,000 are in purely Scottish Unions. There are no recent figures which enable a comparison to be made for Scotland between the numbers insured and the numbers organised; but in 1925 the S.T.U.C. estimated the number of textile workers in Scotland at nearly 125,000, of whom 90,000 were women. At the same date it found thirty-two Unions trying to cater for these workers, twenty-six of them being purely Scottish Unions federated in the Scottish Council of Textile Unions.

These particulars furnish plain evidence of the intense localism which still prevails in most branches of textile Trade Unionism. The outstanding exception is the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers, which has already absorbed a majority of Trade Unionists in the woollen and worsted trades, and, as it operates effectively in Scotland as well as England, might well serve as the nucleus for a comprehensive society open to all textile workers—at all events outside the Lancashire cotton trades.

Even the cotton operatives might in time see the virtues of comprehensive union, in view of the shrinkage of their own industry and the steady growth of mixed fabrics. But in nearly all the textile trades, the tradition of parochialism is very strong and dies hard. In the group as a whole there were at the end of 1936, 430,000 Trade Unionists, and they were enrolled in no less than 268 Trade Unions, including 166 in the cotton trades alone.

THE COTTON OPERATIVES

TRADE UNIONISM in the cotton industry is of a different type from any of those which have been described so far. On the one hand practically the whole labour force consists of workers belonging to definite crafts; but on the other there is no system of apprenticeship, and no sharp line of division between craftsmen and labourers, such as exists in the metal-working and building trades. The spinners, skilled men who work the spinning mules with the assistance of their big and little piecers, are indeed a highly organised and exclusively male craft, who admit the piecers to their Union only on terms of inferiority, and keep a tight hand over the entry to their craft. But the spinners are themselves recruited from the ranks of the piecers, so that they do not form a body of men who enter the trade on terms of superiority to the general run of new entrants. In theory any male piecer can become a spinner, though in fact many never can, because there are not nearly enough of the superior jobs to go round.

The spinners are men; and so are the great majority of the piecers. But the other principal crafts in the cotton industry are staffed preponderantly by female labour. In the weaving trades men and women work side by side, at the same piece-work prices, though the men often operate a larger number of looms, and thus make higher average earnings than the women. In the card and blowing rooms, where the raw cotton is prepared for spinning, women are in a very great majority; and ring spinning, the alternative, highly mechanised process to spinning on the mule, is

also a women's trade. On the other hand, the power loom overlookers, who are in charge of the weaving machinery, are men; and so are the majority of the workers in several smaller crafts. The dyers, bleachers and finishers are a mixed group, with men occupying most of the better-paid positions.

Trade Unionism in the cotton industry has a very long continuous history. At its basis is everywhere the local craft society, organising the workers in a single craft or group of crafts in one town, or perhaps a group of neighbouring small towns and villages.

The local bodies are grouped in central 'amalgamations' for each main section. These exist for industrial purposes, leaving the 'friendly society' activities to the smaller units.

For purposes of collective bargaining the cotton industry falls into two main sections, spinning and manufacturing, with smaller separate sections for dyeing and finishing, calico printing, and certain other groups. There are two main employers' federations—the Master Cotton Spinners' Federation, and the Spinners' and Manufacturers' Federation, which latter represents the weaving and kindred trades. The Spinners' Amalgamation and the Card and Blowing Room Operatives' Amalgamation have both to negotiate with the Master Spinners. The Weavers' Amalgamation, on the other hand, has to negotiate with the Manufacturers' organisation; and it acts sometimes separately and sometimes in conjunction with the smaller craft amalgamations in the manufacturing branches of the industry.

The strong localism of Trade Unionism in the cotton industry has one curious effect. The cotton Unions, centred in Lancashire and Cheshire and a few adjacent parts of Yorkshire and Derbyshire, have no machinery for organising cotton operatives in other parts of the country. They make no attempt at this. The Scottish textile operatives have separate Trade Unions of their own; and the scattered cotton mill workers in other parts of England and Wales

are either not organised at all or are enrolled in the general workers' Unions. Nor is there any natural link between the cotton Trade Unions and the Unions organising workers in the other textile industries, such as the woollen and worsted, hosiery, lace and silk trades. Only in the dyeing and finishing sections is there a Union which enrolls workers handling different textile materials.

Trade Unionism in the cotton industry is numerically strong, whereas it is weak in most of the other textile industries. But, except among the spinners, most of the members play very little active part in Trade Union work. Branch meetings are ill-attended, and contributions are collected mainly by house-to-house canvassing. Except at times of excitement, few women go to the branch meetings. Nevertheless, when a strike is called there is usually a solid response. The members regard their Union as a business proposition well worthy of their support; but they leave the running of it mainly to the full-time officials.

These officials have to pass a qualifying examination. The methods of piece-work payment in the cotton trades are exceedingly complicated, and the most continuous task of the Union official is to argue about them with the parallel employers' official. It is not by any means unknown for a Trade Union official to change sides, and take service under the employers.

Trade Unionism in the cotton trades is by no means militant. Usually disputes are adjusted without a stoppage. When a local strike occurs, the employers not infrequently retaliate by threatening a general lock-out of the entire trade unless the strikers return to work pending negotiations. Similarly the Unions sometimes threaten a general strike over a purely local issue. Occasionally these threats are carried out; but much more often they lead to a compromise, settling the original dispute.

Since the war the cotton trade has undergone a great contraction, owing to the shrinkage of its foreign markets.

It is now accepted that much of this contraction is bound to be permanent. In consequence, there has been persistent unemployment ever since the war; but this has taken the form, to a great extent, of sharing out the available employment by working short time. The result, of course, is loss of earnings to the operatives; so that the standard of living in Lancashire has been seriously reduced. Moreover, firms scrambling for orders have tried to cut wages, even in defiance of signed agreements with the Trade Unions. Even apart from post-war difficulties wages in the cotton trades have always been low on the average, partly on account of the preponderance of female labour. But family earnings have been maintained by the practice of married women continuing at work. This practice still continues, and could not be given up unless wages were raised much higher—which they are not likely to be, in face of keen competition from very low paid labour abroad, especially in the Far East.

In order to meet this competition, firms on the manufacturing side of the cotton industry have endeavoured to increase the number of looms operated by a single weaver, so as to secure a larger output without a proportionate increase in costs. The 'more looms' question has ceaselessly agitated Lancashire since the war, without any satisfactory settlement being reached. On the spinning side of the industry, a corresponding tendency exists. The spinner is speeded up either by increasing the length of the machine which he has to supervise, or by causing it to move at a greater pace. It is, however, impossible to effect very large changes in the methods of production without complete re-equipment; and the cost of this has been too great to be faced by the majority of employers. Lancashire still preserves its predominance in the manufacture of cotton goods of the highest quality; for in these skill counts for most, and mechanisation cannot be carried as far as in the making of the coarser products. But the market for high-quality goods is limited by the poverty of the majority of the consumers; and in the production of the

cheaper goods Lancashire is at a disadvantage in competition with the grossly underpaid labour of Japanese, Indian and Chinese workers. Under these circumstances it is impossible to secure any considerable improvement in wages or conditions; and the Trade Unions have been compelled to take up a defensive role.

THE COTTON TRADE UNIONS

by

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THE HABIT OF organisation among the cotton operatives is old and strong. Cotton had its Trade Unions even before it became a machine industry. The battle for collective bargaining was won almost a century ago. And, perhaps because of the conservative traditions of the industry itself, the cotton Unions have retained, to a unique degree, their old structure.

The characteristics of the cotton Unions are their localisation in Lancashire and the fringes of the adjoining counties, their local autonomy, and their stability. In the last two decades they have withstood a catastrophic revolution. The industry's production is now only half what it was before the war. Its personnel has fallen by at least a third, the volume of plant in operation almost as much. The decline in trade was continuous in the post-war years, with crippling effects on the unions, whose financial strength and bargaining power were sapped by persistent unemployment. In the slump of 1929-32 the decline became precipitous, and carried the trade to a low level from which there has been but slight recovery, and to which in all probability the industry must accustom itself. Total employment has fallen from 712,000 in 1912 to 610,000 in 1924 and 438,000 in 1936. With the industry contracting at this rate the Unions were bound to lose members. Indeed, it says a good deal for them that they are, in spite of all their vicissitudes, so relatively strong today.

The Ministry of Labour's Trade Union statistics considerably overstate the industrial financial membership, but are useful as an indication of the trend. They show that the membership of all the Unions in 1936 was 29 per cent less than in 1913, 42 per cent less than in the inflated peak year of 1920, and 25 per cent less than in 1930. The last twelve months has, however, shown a fairly general increase. The number of Unions has fallen only slightly since 1913. There are today about 200, with a membership of 230,000 to 240,000.

The cotton industry is really a group of industries, each with its own characteristic structure, each linked with the others by inter-dependent and complementary functions. Although the Unions also follow this sectional plan, the complexity is not quite as great as their number suggests. The broad divisions are into spinning, weaving, finishing, and packing. In each (except in finishing) organisation is on a local basis on lines of craft. Unionism began in the eighteenth century with the local trades club, and that is still the groundwork, although for the bigger purposes of Trade Unionism it is now the 'amalgamations' of the local Unions that count. But, except in finishing, where the union of crafts is almost complete, organisation is, by the standards of other industries, still cumbrously decentralised.

The Unions are most conveniently dealt with in their three main sections.

SPINNING

The raw cotton goes first to the spinning mills, the processes in which are covered by the Operative Spinners and Twiners, and the Card, Blowing and Ring Room Operatives. The local Unions of each federate to form a central 'amalgamation' to which they delegate general negotiations, the building up and control of a strike fund, and the provision of accident benefit.

The Cardroom Amalgamation covers (i) the earlier processes by which the raw cotton is prepared for the

spinning machine and (ii) the process of spinning on the ring frame. The Spinners' Amalgamation covers the alternative process (preponderant in Lancashire though not in foreign cotton industries) of spinning on the mule. The Cardroom is a mixed Union, in which women and girls are in the majority. The Spinners are wholly males. Ring spinning, mainly a female occupation, is gaining ground relatively.

The mule spinners have an extremely old organisation. The Amalgamation itself was formed in 1853, although it did not include all the districts until 1890. The complicated piece-price lists negotiated with the employers have not changed vitally for sixty years. The Amalgamation now consists of 44,200 members in 51 districts and branches. Many of these are bound together in Provinces—Oldham Province (founded in 1843) with 15 branches, Bolton with 11, Preston with 3, Yorkshire with 6. The districts vary very much in size, from Bolton's 17,600 members (5,600 spinners and 12,000 piecers), Oldham's 10,000 (5,500 spinners and 4,500 piecers) to small branches with twenty members or less. There is no uniformity in contributions or benefits.

Mule spinning is peculiar in its division of labour. The mule is a machine normally tended by three persons—a skilled adult (the spinner or minder), a youth (the big piecer), and a boy (the little piecer). In theory the piecers are apprentices, gradually progressing to the full status of a spinner, between whose wages and theirs there is a wide gap. In effect they are the spinner's employees; their wages may be subject to individual bargaining, and even in districts where there are agreed rates for piecers the spinner's control is none the less great. This old relation is reflected in the organisation of the Union. Although since 1920 piecers have been eligible for full membership (on a lower scale of contributions and benefits) power resides with the spinners. One result has been that while the spinners have had almost hundred per cent membership, little more than half the piecers have been in the Union.

This piecer system has always had its social anomalies, but the continuous expansion of the industry up to the war gave some justification for the apprenticeship theory; openings at the top were always being created through the building of new mills. The decline brought out the weaknesses. The highest paid jobs, the spinners', became fewer; the big piecers, whose promotion was blocked, grew older, and many men with families were to be found earning a youth's wages; little piecing became a blind alley. Naturally, the supply of boys has been reduced to a trickle, and the recent slight recovery of trade exposed an intense shortage of juvenile labour at one end and an oversupply of adult labour at the other. This problem, now one of the main preoccupations of the Unions and the employers, involves difficult questions of mill organisation and of wage relations.

The Cardroom Amalgamation's main problems are of low-paid female labour, an absence of uniform rates, and a juvenile labour shortage. The men's occupations covered by it are pretty strongly organised. But until the industry can offer more regular employment than it has given in the last fifteen years it will continue to lose labour to newer industries in which working amenities are greater.

The structure of the Cardroom Amalgamation (formed in 1886) is much the same as that of the Spinners; it has four Provinces and sixteen districts, and 44,000 members. Conciliation machinery is of the same type for each. On the failure of a district joint meeting, a dispute is taken up by the Amalgamation and the employers' central organisation. Since the fighting fund is controlled by the central body, strike pay cannot be given without its authority. When negotiations have broken down, an agreement for co-operation between the two amalgamations comes into play, and each automatically withdraws labour in support of the other. From 1931 to 1935 there was provision for reference of disputes to an independent conciliation tribunal but this has now lapsed.

MANUFACTURING

On the manufacturing side the Trade Union picture is more complicated. When the yarn leaves the spinning machines it has to be prepared to form the weft and warp of the loom. Here come a whole series of operations, some relatively simple, employing girls and young women, others the skilled crafts of men. Some part of the preparation of the yarn may be done in the spinning mill by winders, reelers and warpers—mostly women and girls organised in the weavers' unions (and in one district in a Cardroom Union). Another form of warping, now diminishing in importance, is mill-warping, done by men strongly organised in an old, close craft Union of a few hundred men, the Amalgamated Society of Ball Warpers.

Or the yarn may be prepared by the manufacturer in his weaving mill. Here may be employed winders, reelers and warpers, organised in the Weavers' Unions; tape-sizers, men in the Tape-Sizers' Unions; warpdressers (if the warp is to be coloured), men in the fairly strong Warpdressers' Unions; and twistors and drawers, principally men, in the Beamers', Twistors' and Drawers' Unions.

In the weaving shed proper three Unions are concerned—the Overlookers, all men; the Weavers, men and women; and the Textile Warehousemen, who organise the weft and cloth carriers. When the woven cloth goes into the manufacturers' warehouse it is handled by members of the Textile Warehousemen.

Although the workers are so closely linked by the fact of common employment, often in very small mills, the craft distinctions are closely kept. All the Unions, except the small Ball Warpers' Association, have a federal structure—the local Unions combine for certain purposes in a central 'amalgamation'. The Amalgamated Weavers' Association (formed in 1884) is much the largest; in 1937 it had 94,000 members (19,000 men and 75,000 women) in 34 district Unions of very varying size. The Amalgamated

Textile Warehousemen, with 7,500 members (2,000 of them women), has 20 local Unions. The General Union of Associations of Loom Overlookers (formed in 1885) covers most of the score or so of district Unions. The Amalgamated Association of Beamers, Twisters and Drawers (Hand and Machine)—formed in 1866—has 37 districts and 4,300 members (200 of them women). The Tape-sizers' Unions, rather less numerous, form two amalgamations. The four Warpdressers' Unions are in the General Union of Lancashire and Yorkshire Warpdressers' Associations, which also overlaps into the woollen industry.

Each local Union fixes its own contributions and benefits, apart from the strike, lockout and victimisation pay administered through the amalgamation. There has been, however, especially among the weavers, a close approximation to uniform custom in recent years. Friendly benefits are not extensive.

The manufacturing section has to some extent overcome the craft complexity through its conciliation machinery. In every district the Unions form a local Textile Trades Federation, and the amalgamations join to form the Northern Counties Textile Trades Federation. The procedure of negotiation is not constant, but if the rules are followed it provides, as on the spinning side, a series of steps before a general crisis is reached. If a local secretary fails to settle a mill dispute he calls in his amalgamation. If the amalgamation officials also fail, the local Textile Trades Federation meets the local employers' association. If that fails there will be a joint meeting between the Northern Counties Federation and the employers' central committee. On disagreement there, the dispute may be carried further to the Conciliation Committee, which has an independent chairman and two outside members appointed by employers and operatives respectively. The procedure is admittedly rather long, but it has worked fairly well.

The strength and area of collective bargaining differ from section to section. The weakest are those with large

numbers of young women workers. For instance, over 50,000 women are engaged in reeling, beaming, warping, etc., and some two-thirds of them are unorganised; it is hardly surprising that their system of wage-lists is confused and incomplete. The weavers form the largest section numerically—about 150,000 men and women, of whom something over a half are organised.

The weavers' wage-rates are now protected by the legalisation of the main piece-price lists negotiated with the employers. They form the only industrial group in the country to which Parliament has so far applied this principle. It was adopted in desperation in 1935 after collective bargaining had collapsed and there was widespread demoralisation on both sides, competitive wage-cutting and a return to the anarchy of individual mill agreements. The organisations of employers and employed made a joint approach for State intervention, either through a Trade Board or through the legalisation of collective agreements. The Government chose the latter, although the former would probably have met the case better. The Act leaves untouched the evil of under-employment, the system by which an operative may put in a full week at the mill, run less than his usual number of looms, receive only half or quarter pay, and yet be debarred from receiving unemployment benefit or assistance. The Weavers' Amalgamation is now pressing for a minimum wage, which would greatly mitigate the effects of the system, besides raising the low level to which weavers' earnings often fall.

The contraction of the industry and the severity of internal competition have given inducement for the adoption of labour-saving devices (as in the automatic loom), and the increase of the amount of machinery attended to by each operative. The tendencies will be strengthened by the shortage of new entrants. In the next few years the weavers' Unions may be called on to work out a new policy towards this increasing mechanisation, which is also affecting the smaller crafts seriously.

FINISHING

The finishing section presents a sharp contrast in organisation. It embraces a number of horizontal processes—calico-printing, dyeing, bleaching—which are now covered by one large Union, and a handful of very small craft or local Unions. The large Union is the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers, formed in 1936 out of the Operative Bleachers, Dyers and Finishers' Association (Bolton Amalgamation), which covered Lancashire, the Amalgamated Society of Dyers, Bleachers, Finishers and Kindred Trades, which had members in both cotton and wool, and the National Union of Textile Workers, which had a few cotton members but was mainly woollen. The resultant merger is now the principal Union in the Yorkshire woollen industry besides being the main organ for cotton finishing. Its cotton membership is about 30,000, of whom 3,000 are women. Organisation is centralised, and as the employers also are closely combined, negotiations have been very much simplified.

Packing or making-up is done in the Manchester warehouses by members of eleven small Unions associated in the Kindred Trades Federation in the Home and Export Shipping Industry; five of them also form a Board of Inside Warehouse Workers and negotiate in common.

No mention has been made of some small craft Unions in spinning, of the enginemen's Unions, and of the handful of cotton Unions in Scotland. Nor, because of the wide local variations, has attention been given to the types of benefit paid. It may be added that most but by no means all the Unions are affiliated (usually through their amalgamations) to the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party. The principal amalgamations are also members of the General Federation of Trade Unions, of which they are now the largest constituents.

To the outside world the peculiar disunity of cotton trade Unionism is disguised by its federal appearance. The

title 'amalgamation' adopted in the various sections, suggests much closer unity than exists. Then again, the Unions do contrive to present a common front on many questions. The principal amalgamations combine for political and parliamentary purposes in the United Textile Factory Workers' Association, which is even the Unions' spokesman in such industrial matters as holidays with pay, and forms the British section of the Textile Workers' International. Necessity has forced this degree of co-operative action, but it is no adequate substitute for organic unity.

For years there has been talk of 'One big cotton union', but a sub-committee of the United Textile Factory Workers' Association had to conclude in 1936 that nothing can be done until each amalgamation centralises its own organisation. It suggested the steps by which rules, contributions and benefits might be made uniform, and districts combined into areas, which in turn would be affiliated to the amalgamation. Probably some such measure of consolidation is the most natural advance. But each section is a problem to itself, and the effort involved in reducing 200 Unions to a manageable dozen is immense. Almost every amalgamation can report in the last thirty years abortive efforts at unification—the Spinners, for instance, in 1903, 1910, and 1922; the Cardroom in 1921; the Weavers in 1933; the Textile Warehousemen in 1912 and 1929. But every time reform has broken on the rock of local vested interests. The case for the rationalisation of Trade Union structure has become all the greater with the decline of membership, for many district Unions now spend an extravagant proportion of income in expenses of management. In another direction also the Unions exhibit their conservatism. Both the Weavers and the Cardroom have far more women members than men, but no women have ever sat on their central committees, and few on their district committees.

The cotton Unions have hardly kept pace with the times. And now that the whole trend of the industry is towards

closer integration (as the proposals to the Government for an Enabling Bill illustrate) more powerful and energetic Trade Union organisation is much to be desired. The Unions will not be able to play their full part in any system of 'self-government' of the industry, or in any system of State-control, unless they can break through their nineteenth-century crust.

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE WOOLLEN AND WORSTED TRADES

IN 1937 THE insured workers in the woollen and worsted industry numbered 223,000, excluding workers in the textile bleaching, dyeing and printing trades, in whose case it is not possible to make a separation between woollens and other textiles. Of these 223,000 workers roughly 93,000 were males and 130,000 females, whereas in the dyeing and finishing sections males predominated by more than two to one. Both the woollen and the worsted trades are centred mainly in the West Riding of Yorkshire; but in the case of woollens there are important smaller centres in the West of England and in the Border Counties of Scotland—not to mention Welsh flannels, Witney blankets, and other more scattered manufactures. In the West Riding, Bradford, Keighley and Halifax make chiefly worsteds—from combed, long-staple wools. Bradford is the centre of the woolcombing trade. Leeds, Batley, Dewsbury and Morley are engaged in the woollen manufacture, making principally woollen tissues from wool of shorter staples. Batley and Dewsbury use a good deal of 'shoddy', made from old woollen rags, and 'mungo', from tailors' clippings; and the Colne Valley also specialises in the cheaper types of woollen goods. Huddersfield has long manufactured both woollens and worsteds; and in most of the centres the old localisation of products is gradually being modified—a process hastened by the increasing output of tissues made partly of woollen and partly of other textile yarns.

The worsted branch of the industry is practically confined to Yorkshire, whereas the woollen manufacture is

more widely dispersed. The woollen products of the Stroud Valley are of exceptionally high quality, and so are the Scottish border tweeds. Yorkshire makes goods of all qualities, from the best to the cheapest, and employs many more workers than all the other areas combined. The story of modern Trade Unionism in the industry can be told mainly in terms of its development in the West Riding, though the Midland hosiery trades, which are dealt with elsewhere, have a peculiar Trade Union history of their own.

Before the Industrial Revolution, the woollen and worsted industry was by a long way the most important British manufacture. It was then widely scattered over the country; but the principal centres were in the Western Counties, East Anglia, the West Riding of Yorkshire, and the Scottish Lowlands. In the eighteenth century, even before the advent of power-driven machinery, Yorkshire was making very rapid headway, partly at the expense of the older centres, and was already specialising in the production of cheap goods which undercut the established products of the Norwich worsted trade and the woollen trades of the Western Counties. In this period the homes of Trade Unionism were in East Anglia and in the West, where the industry was largely in the hands of rich merchant-clothiers, who had become the virtual employers of the 'domestic' producers—that is, of the spinners and weavers who worked in their own homes mainly on materials belonging to the merchants. The weavers in these areas repeatedly formed during the eighteenth century combinations extending over whole counties, and sometimes over several counties at once, usually in the first instance in order to petition Parliament for the regulation of their wages, but also in order to press their demands directly upon the clothiers. The woollen and worsted weavers of the eighteenth century can be counted among the pioneers of Trade Unionism.

In Yorkshire, on the other hand, the trade was mainly in the hands of small working masters, who owned their own tools and materials and dealt with the merchants as independent producers. Under these conditions, there was

little or no combination; for the number of wage-workers was relatively small, and there were no large firms. With the development of water power Yorkshire enjoyed an increasing advantage from her many streams in hilly country, not only for dyeing and bleaching processes, but also for turning water-wheels when power was applied. With the advent of steam-power the Yorkshire producers forged yet further ahead; for the small masters of the North adapted themselves far more energetically than the great merchant-clothiers to the new methods of production. The woollen and worsted industries in the West Riding developed rapidly on capitalistic lines, and the older centres in East and West lost ground apace. With the factory system came Trade Unionism among the factory workers, and also to some extent among the handloom weavers whose livelihood was threatened by the new machines. Yorkshire as well as Lancashire had its 'Luddite' disturbances and power-loom riots; and the Yorkshire domestic workers played their part in the hunger agitations of Chartism. Trade Unionism, however, developed chiefly among the factory operatives. The Yorkshiremen, organised in the Clothiers' Union and the Leeds, Huddersfield and Bradford District Union, were an important element in 1830-1 in John Doherty's National Association for the Protection of Labour; and after the collapse of the N.A.P.L. its Yorkshire sections survived to collaborate with Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union in 1833-4.

The large Yorkshire Unions shared in the great Trade Union defeat of 1834; and in the ensuing period only a few local bodies among the skilled workers, largely in the nature of friendly societies, seem to have survived. It is worth recording that the Bradford Managers' and Overlookers' Society dates back to 1833, and the Bradford Woolsorters' Society to 1838. By the 1850's and 1860's bodies of this type were expanding and becoming more definitely Trade Unions. Numerous local societies of overlookers, woolsorters, woolcombers, dyers and finishers,

and other skilled craftsmen were formed or re-formed in the 'sixties, and in the boom of the early 'seventies several attempts, accompanied by extensive strikes, were made to organise the main body of operatives in the spinning and weaving sections, especially in the woollen trades of Huddersfield and Leeds. A setback followed during the slump of the later 'seventies; but in 1881 the Huddersfield weavers formed a Union which developed into the General Union of Weavers and Textile Workers, and remained the leading society in the weaving section of the industry up to its amalgamation with the National Society of Dyers and the Yeadon and Guiseley Factory Workers' Union in 1922 to form the National Union of Textile Workers.

The General Union, however, remained for a long time small in relation to the number of workers eligible for membership. Its main strength was in the Huddersfield district, and it failed either to absorb the existing Unions of skilled workers or to prevent the formation of new societies. The New Unionism of 1889 and the following years brought some increase of membership, and the foundation of some new local societies. But the woollen and worsted operatives did not succeed in creating for themselves an organisation comparable in strength with that which had developed earlier in the neighbouring cotton industry of Lancashire.

The organisation of the industry was doubtless partly responsible for this failure. In the worsted trades, it was—and to a great extent still is—usual for each firm to specialise upon a single process, with the consequence that there existed a multiplicity of small firms, with which the local societies of skilled workers in each special craft felt themselves competent to deal. In the woollen trade, on the other hand, it was customary for firms to undertake the entire process of manufacture from the wool to the finished product; and in consequence the typical business was somewhat larger, though a good deal smaller than in the cotton industry. But wool-spinning never developed into a highly-skilled craft like cotton-spinning,

and the predominance of female labour in the woollen sections of the industry made organisation a difficult matter. The General Union rose to a membership of nearly 5,000 in the peak year 1892; but by the late 'nineties it had declined to about 2,000, and even by 1910 it had only 4,500 members.

From this point there began an extraordinarily rapid advance. The woollen workers played their part in the general growth of Trade Union membership during the years immediately preceding the war. Their organisation spread to areas previously untouched, and they were able to negotiate a number of important collective agreements. But the outbreak of war in 1914 was followed by a much bigger advance. Throughout the war the woollen and worsted trades were kept busy upon Government contracts; and the Unions, headed by the General Union of Textile Workers, were prompt in insisting upon the observance of the Fair Wages Clause and in using their opportunity to secure wage-advances and a levelling up of conditions in the more backward areas. By 1917 the membership of the G.U.T.W. exceeded 30,000, and by the end of 1918 it was approaching 50,000. Nor was this the peak; for in the short-lived post-war boom membership rose faster than ever. By the end of 1919 it was over 100,000, and in many parts of the West Riding strikes or threats to strike against working with non-Unionists had been effective.

These triumphs did not last. In 1920 membership reached 110,000; but thereafter it fell off rapidly in the post-war slump. By 1922 it was down to 40,000. In that year, as we have seen, the G.U.T.W. merged with two other Unions to form the National Union of Textile Workers, which started with a membership of about 57,000, and, after a brief setback, increased to nearly 70,000 in 1926.

These changes in organisation reflected the changing conditions of the industry during and after the war. During the war the woollen and worsted trades passed under State control. The State regulated the supplies of

raw wool, and was the principal consumer of the industry's products. The control of production was vested, under Government authority, in a Wool Control Board, on which the Unions were able to secure effective representation. When this system ended, with the disappearance of State control at the end of the war, the industry set up a Joint Industrial Council under the Whitley Scheme; and up to 1927 wages and conditions were regulated mainly through the J.I.C.

Before this body came into existence the Trade Unions, under pressure of war conditions, had formed a federal organisation—the National Association of Unions in the Textile Trade—with the aim of including hosiery and other textile workers as well as the operatives in the woollen and worsted industry proper. The initial object of this federation was to resist the inclusion of the woollen industry in the war-time extension of unemployment insurance to munition workers; but it speedily assumed additional functions, and became a general federation of the Trade Unions for industrial purposes, serving, in effect, to co-ordinate the policy of the various Unions on the J.I.C.

Up to 1925 wage adjustments were made peaceably by negotiation through the J.I.C. The 48-hour week was established through the J.I.C. in 1919. Time-work rates remained unchanged for the shortened week, and piece-work rates were raised by 15½ per cent, to compensate piece-workers for the reduction in hours. Thereafter wages were first advanced in the post-war boom, and then reduced, for a time under a sliding scale, as prices fell. But in 1925 a deadlock was reached, the Unions demanding a wage advance and the employers a reduction. There was a strike—the first general stoppage of the industry as a whole—involving about 150,000 workers. A Court of Investigation was appointed, and, as a result of its report, the dispute ended in the continuance of the existing rates. But thereafter the strength of the Unions fell off, as it did in other industries, partly as a consequence of the defeat of the General Strike. In 1927 the employers gave notice

to end the existing agreement; and a failure to come to terms was followed by a period of guerilla warfare, complicated by the employers' demand—supported by some of the Unions—for a tariff to safeguard the industry against foreign imports. From 1929 onwards one section of employers after another began cutting wages. There was another strike, which ended inconclusively, followed in 1930 by a Government committee of inquiry, which recommended a reduction in wages. A further strike followed; but after some weeks the resistance of the Trade Unions was broken, and the workers drifted back either without any formal agreement, or on a basis of sectional settlements confined to particular groups. Further wage-cuts were enforced in 1931, and an attempt to rally the Trade Union forces for a general stoppage failed. The solidarity of the National Association had been broken, and Trade Union membership slumped heavily. By 1931, the N.U.T.W. had fallen to well under 50,000, and by 1934 to less than 40,000.

Thereafter began a slow revival, and in 1936 the situation was radically altered by an extensive amalgamation. As we have seen, the National Society of Dyers had been among the Unions which joined in 1922 to form in the N.U.T.W. At this stage, however, the two other leading societies in the dyeing and finishing trades had remained aloof. The N.S.D. had its strength mainly among dyers of woollen yarns and woollen piece-goods and of cotton yarns, whereas the larger Amalgamated Society of Dyers and Finishers covered cotton and other textiles as well as wool and worsted piece-dyeing, and the Bolton Bleachers and Dyers' Amalgamation had its main strength in the bleaching section of the cotton industry. In 1936 the Amalgamated Dyers and the Bolton Amalgamation joined forces with the N.U.T.W. to form the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers.

Thus, today, the main body of workers in the woollen and worsted trades is organised in a comprehensive Union which also covers bleachers, dyers and finishers and calico

printers in other textile industries. This amalgamated society, with a membership of about 90,000, is now the principal negotiating body for the woollen and worsted trades, and has done much to re-establish the system of collective bargaining, which had been shattered during the world depression. There still remain, however, a large number of small Unions in the woollen and worsted trades, chiefly among the skilled craftsmen. These include, for example, the Managers and Overlookers' Society (1,500), on the spinning and preparing side, the Yorkshire Association of Power-loom Overlookers (1,650), in the weaving section, the Yorkshire Warptwisters (1,100), the National Wool Sorters (2,000), and such smaller societies as the Bradford Warpdressers (500) and the old-established and highly craft-conscious Leeds Cloth Pressers (350). There is a local 'all-grades' Union still outside the amalgamation—the Saddleworth Weavers' and Woollen Textile Workers' Association (1,400). The Scottish Unions, federated in a Scottish Council of Textile Unions (13,000), covering other textiles as well as woollens, still maintain their separate existence, though the N.U.D.B.T.W. has a considerable Scottish membership in the dyeing section and also in the West of Scotland woollen industry. The numerous local societies of hosiery workers in the Midlands and the carpet workers of Kidderminster and Glasgow also remain apart. In addition, the National Union of General and Municipal Workers has a membership both in the Leeds dyeing and finishing trades and in the woolcombing trade in Bradford, and in certain areas, such as Wales, the Transport and General Workers' Union is also involved.

These facts show that the woollen and worsted operatives are still a long way off effective solidarity. Numerically, the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers occupies a preponderant position; but sectional organisation remains strong in certain of the skilled crafts in the West Riding, and in comparison with the bleachers and dyers the main body of spinners and weavers in the Yorkshire textile towns remains weakly organised. Membership,

however, has been increasing fairly rapidly since the amalgamation of 1936, and effective observance of collective bargaining is being re-established, though the difficulties of the export trade and the persistence of unemployment at a high level have so far made it impossible for the Trade Unions to secure really considerable improvements in wages and conditions of work.

From 1927 to 1936 there were in effect no collective agreements applying to the entire industry, though in 1935 the National Association of Unions in the Textile Trade and the employers' council jointly reaffirmed the principle of the 48-hour week. In 1936, however, as a result of pressure from the Unions, the Minister of Labour set up a Board of Enquiry under the Conciliation Act of 1896, and as a result of this Board's report new collective agreements were made covering wages and overtime and night work. The Unions had asked for the establishment of a Trade Board to cover the worsted spinning section, in which very low wages were being paid and there was exceptional difficulty in getting agreements observed. The Board was not hostile to this claim, but recommended that, in the first instance, both sides should improve their organisation, and aim at more comprehensive observance of standard wages and conditions.

Thus, after an interval of nearly ten years, the woollen and worsted trades have come back to collective bargaining. Unquestionably, the amalgamation has greatly solidified Trade Unionism in an industry in which membership has hitherto been subject to very violent fluctuations, and it should be possible for the new National Union to become the nucleus for a really effective consolidation of Trade Unionism not only in the West Riding, but also over the ill-organised textile industries of the Midland Counties, and perhaps of Scotland as well.

TRADE UNIONISM AMONG
GARMENT WORKERS

by

A. CONLEY

General Secretary, National Union of Tailors and
Garment Workers.

THE GARMENT INDUSTRY consists of a group of trades which make a substantial contribution to the national wealth and provide employment for about 5 per cent of the total working population. The insured workers (aged 16 to 64), including dressmaking and millinery, but not boot and shoe manufacture, number about half a million. Female workers are in the proportion of about three to one male. The output of the clothing trade represents about 8 per cent of the total national expenditure, approximately £320 million a year. Expenditure on clothing is largely governed by general economic conditions. There is usually a marked rise when the real income of the consumers increases; but bad times have an early adverse effect.

On the productive side the garment industry still retains the characteristics described half a century ago in Charles Booth's *Survey of London Life and Labour*. Mrs. Sidney Webb then made a special study of the tailoring trades, constituting what she called 'a new province of production' inhabited by a peculiar people working under a new system with new instruments, yet separated from an old-established native industry by a narrow and constantly-shifting boundary.

On one side of the boundary the English skilled craftsman was to be found, working on the traditional lines of one man, one garment, with regulated wages and standardised working hours. On the other side was the Jewish contractor with his highly-organised staff of fixers, basters, fellers, machinists, button-hole hands, and pressers, turning out coats by the score; and with them a mass of English women, unorganised and unregulated, engaged in other sections of the trade. Into this new province of industry, known as the sweating system, poured a flood of foreign immigrant poor, of which the East End of London was the receptacle. Mrs. Webb emphasised the difference between the work of a British journeyman tailor, employed by a first-class West End firm, and the same article of clothing turned out by a Jewish contractor for the wholesale trade in ready-made garments, as not merely one of material or cut, but of wear and fit. The difference between a mass-production garment and a bespoke garment made by skilled craftsmen in small establishments where subdivision of labour followed well-defined lines.

This boundary line, which is still discernible in the garment industry, originated in consequence of the transformation of the clothing industry from a group of skilled handicrafts to machine production, and from retail to wholesale business. The sewing-machine itself did not come into general use in the clothing trades until the second half of the nineteenth century. Developments in mechanisation and factory production met an enormous new demand for cheap clothing, which could not be satisfied by the retail-bespoke establishments. But the latter continued to supply the demand for high-class tailored garments. The English journeyman tailors continued to hold their own as craftsmen. Through Union organisation they established fairly good standards of wages and hours, and a system of price per garment, based upon a time-log which took account of the time a skilled craftsman would require for a particular job.

These were the aristocrats of the garment industry.

Below them was the class of tailors working in their own homes and employing the more or less unskilled labour of members of their family—the class to which historically the term ‘sweater’ properly applies. Charles Booth identified this term as a word which originated among journeymen tailors to describe those who worked at home after leaving the workshop, and exploited the labour of their wives and daughters. Out of this overtime home-work developed ‘sweating’ in the secondary sense—the exploitation of home-workers by contractors and sub-contractors serving the wholesale manufacturers of ready-made clothing.

Trade Unionism in the clothing trades has been conditioned by these differences. When Mrs. Webb made her East End investigations there were over 1,000 Jewish coatmakers within the Jewish settlement employing hands other than their own families; of these three-fourths employed fewer than 10 workpeople, only 1.6 per cent employed over 25; and the general rate in these domestic slop-shops was for women about 2½*d.* an hour. Trade Unionism could not make much headway among these workers until the anti-sweating agitation had brought Trade Boards into existence in 1909.

On the other hand, the skilled tailors are among the pioneers of working-class combination. In the fifteenth century journeymen tailors in London and some provincial cities lived together in companies, and their guild organisation was extensive. Early in the eighteenth century, craft organisation developed round the inns where the journeymen met and discussed trade affairs. These ‘houses of call’, of which there were at least 40 in London alone, served as labour exchanges as well as headquarters of the trade clubs. Employers who wanted workers sent to them for the numbers required; and the journeymen took the jobs offered in the order of their names on the book. While there were unemployed journeymen, no man was to work in the trade for more than 12 hours a day, or do more than a day’s work in 12 hours. Benefits included

superannuation and unemployment allowances. One house of call paid as much as £40 a week to unemployed members.

Despite repressive legislation tailors' combinations maintained a fairly continuous existence throughout the century, and during the Napoleonic Wars won a series of wage increases by strike action. In 1834 the journeymen tailors were strong enough to call a strike of 20,000 workers, lasting for several months, in resistance to an attempt to impose the 'Document'. The journeymen's Union, the United Operative Tailors, was then part of Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union; but it was smashed by the employers' blow. The next two decades were occupied in reconstruction; and by 1860 there existed the United Society of Tailors and two other societies in London, and at least 48 separate provincial societies.

In 1866 a Conference was attended by delegates from local societies in 67 towns, with about 6,000 members; and many other towns which sent no delegates declared themselves in favour of amalgamation. This conference created the Amalgamated Society of Journeymen Tailors, based on the affiliation of the autonomous local bodies which were to pay 3*d.* per member quarterly to the Amalgamation's Management Fund, but otherwise retained full control over local affairs. The Amalgamated Society laid down a standard week of 57 hours. The conference agreed that hours of work per garment, and price per hour, should be locally determined, but a general log was to be drawn up by the Amalgamated Society. Day-wage men were not to be recognised. The London operatives were to seek 1*d.* per hour advance, as their rate influenced wages throughout the country. The Amalgamated Society started with about 7,000 members; but within a year grew to nearly 12,000. Bad trade, trade disputes, and heavy levies upon the membership weakened it in the next few years.

The Scottish organisations also drew together. A conference of delegates from a score of local societies formed

in 1865 the Scottish National Association of Operative Tailors, with a programme comprising the 57-hour week and a uniform wage for all Scotland. About the same time the London journeymen amalgamated their scattered groups to form the London Operative Tailors' Protective Association. Thus the mid-'sixties marked the beginning of effective national organisation.

The question of the Uniform Time Statement, and the standard 10-hour day (57 hours per week) constituted a unifying issue among the Scottish, London and provincial journeymen. Although the London and Scottish associations were separate from the Amalgamated Society of Journeymen Tailors, negotiations for framing one uniform national time-log brought the three amalgamations closer together. The first National Time Log in Scotland was framed in 1867, and became the basis on which all journeymen tailors' earnings in the Scottish towns were calculated. The Log now in operation is an equated statement of the "Log" Times and "Clock" Times compiled by the Union and is included in the determinations of the Retail Bespoke Tailoring Trade Board for Scotland. In England and Wales district logs were framed by local agreement until the London Log came to be recognised as the basis for calculating journeymen's earnings throughout the country. The rates now in operation in fourteen defined areas are as determined by the Retail Bespoke Tailoring Trade Board for England and Wales.

From the standpoint of both wages and hours organisation was necessary to improve standards. In many towns it was common for tailors to work from 14 to 18 hours per day—a Bolton delegate even reported 20 hours per day. Wage standards were so low as to have caused very considerable emigration.

The trade was even then beginning to feel the impact of new methods of production—introduction of machines, and employment of out-workers, along with the advent of the clothing factory. The delegates at the Manchester Conference of 1866 declared that the workmen ought to

get one-half of the work done by the machine. Another resolution insisted that out-work should, if possible, be abolished, and where it had to be done, out-workers should be paid extra to meet expenses.

Thus the work-people's organisations were brought to face the problem produced by the advent of wholesale manufacturers who contracted with others who undertook to provide the labour to work on materials provided by the wholesale house. By the time Mrs. Webb made her study, this system of second-hand employment, and the sweating conditions inseparable from it, was well advanced. It involved particularly women workers, out-workers, and the cutters employed in the wholesale trade. Trade Unionism had therefore to break new ground. Following the Trade Union revival of the late 'eighties, which led to the development of a number of local garment-workers' Unions, mainly among cutters, came the establishment in 1895 of the Amalgamated Union of Clothiers' Operatives and sixteen years later of the Amalgamated Jewish Tailors,' Pressers' and Machinists' Trade Union, whose titles indicate the spread of Trade Unionism in the garment industry.

In this period public agitation against 'sweating' reached its climax in the Trade Boards Act of 1909. Conditions in the 'sweat-shops' are pretty clearly indicated by the first Trade Board rates. The Board's first Order fixed minimum rates at 6*d.* per hour for men, and 3½*d.* per hour for women, other than learners; male learners' rates ranged from 4*s.* 2*d.* per week of 50 hours at 14 to 21*s.* 11*d.* at 21. Female learners started at 3*s.* a week while under 14, and rose to 12*s.* 6*d.* at the end of four years.

An important Trade Union development took place at this time in Leeds, one of the principal clothing centres. In 1913 twelve local Unions amalgamated with the Leeds Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union. This amalgamation carried to a further stage efforts, initiated by the General Federation of Trade Unions in

1911, to bring the various societies into a single national Union. In 1912 representatives of the Unions affiliated to the G.F.T.U. agreed in principle to establish an Amalgamated Union, to be called the United Garment-Workers' Union, in which the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses, the Amalgamated Union of Clothiers' Operatives, the Federation of Tailors, Pressers, Machinists, etc., the London Clothiers' Cutters, and the Scottish Operative Tailors were to be merged. Negotiations were interrupted by the outbreak of war. In 1915 amalgamation was achieved between the A.U.C.O. and the Amalgamated Jewish Tailors', Pressers' and Machinists' Trade Union, and the London Clothiers' Cutters. Soon afterwards the Shirt, Jacket and Overall Workers and the Belfast Shirt and Collar Workers entered the amalgamation, which could properly bear the name of the United Garment-Workers' Union, though it was far from complete. Four years later, in 1920, the Scottish Operative Tailors and Tailoresses agreed to combine with the U.G.W.U. under a new name—the Tailors' and Garment-Workers' Union. Eleven more years elapsed before the old English Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses joined the amalgamation. It was hoped to include the two smaller societies, the United Ladies' Tailors and the Waterproof Garment-Workers' Union, but this proved impossible at the time. When the present National Union of Tailors and Garment-Workers began operations in January 1932 it represented approximately 60,000 workers. Its present membership is approaching 100,000.

With regard to wages and working conditions, we have seen that the tailors' organisations had established at an early date the principle of the Time Log. Details have also been given of the first Trade Board determinations. The next important step towards national wage agreements was the Leeds agreement of 1913, negotiated by the A.U.C.O.—the first local agreement covering all sections. The rates laid down in this agreement were considerably higher than the Trade Board rates, which were indeed

lower than garment-workers in many parts of the country were able to obtain. Any wage increase resulting for the male workers from the Trade Board minimum rates was confined largely to the smaller towns, and sometimes to young workers just out of their time in the larger centres. Female workers benefited from the minimum time-rate mainly in the South Midland, South-Western, Eastern and London districts. Over the whole country about one-third of the female garment-workers received an addition to wages as a result of the Trade Board rates.

Subsequent efforts to improve these rates were not successful before the war, though the Trade Board in July 1914 adopted a proposal to increase the female's minimum time-rate to $3\frac{1}{2}d.$, and agreed to fix for the Retail Bespoke Tailoring trade minimum rates similar to those applicable to Readymade and Wholesale Bespoke Tailoring. War-time changes present a somewhat complicated pattern of Trade Union standard rates, Trade Board general minimum time-rates, and awards of the Committee of Production. We reach the era of national agreements with representative employers' organisations in 1919, and with it the current practice of making wages, hours and working conditions negotiated by the Union legally obligatory throughout the industry by putting the agreed rates through the Trade Boards.

The first national Trade Union agreement was made in 1919 with the Wholesale Clothing Manufacturers' Federation. In 1920 national agreements were negotiated with the Wholesale Mantle and Costume Manufacturers' Federation, and the Shirt, Collar and Tie Manufacturers' Federation. Since these agreements were made, and particularly since the present amalgamation has been able to speak as the sole National Union in the industry, standards have been further improved. Existing agreements, though they fall short of the Union's claims, embody important gains in wages, hours and working conditions. The 48-hour week is universally observed, and has been observed since 1919, but the 40-hour week is a capital

item in the Union's programme, with a corresponding alteration of minimum rates to ensure the maintenance of wage-standards.

As an indication of the employers' attitude towards the Union it will suffice to quote the addendum to the existing agreement with the Wholesale Clothing Manufacturers' Federation:—

"The Federation has found it mutually convenient to have some organisation representing the workers with which to negotiate collectively on their behalf, and, while it is not compulsory for an employee of any member of the Federation to join a Trade Union, the Federation recognises the National Union of Tailors and Garment-Workers as the organisation representing workers employed on garment-making processes (other than those holding departmental or managerial positions)."

The national agreements provide for dealing with local and national disputes through joint committees. They are subject to six months' notice on either side. They carry, too, a recommendation from the employers' organisations to their members to give their workers annual holidays with pay, and a scale of holiday payments drawn up by the Federations has been in operation since 1930. Existing minimum wage scales may be summarised as follows:—

Males. Measure Cutters.

London 1s. 7½d., Provinces 1s. 6d. per hour.

Stock Cutters and other comparable classes.

London 1s. 5½d., Provinces 1s. 4d. per hour.

Male learners' rates range from 10s. per week at 14 to 46s. at 21.

Females.

Time workers 7½d., Piece workers and Conveyor-belt workers 8½d. per hour.

Female learners' rates from 9s. in the first year to 25s. in the fourth year.

At the time of writing, the National Union has practically completed negotiations on proposed terms of amalgamation with the two outstanding local Unions in the Industry, the United Ladies Tailors' Trade Union, whose membership of about 5,000 is employed in London, and the Waterproof Garment Workers' Union with a membership of about 3,000, in Manchester, which is the main centre of the Waterproof Trade.

Some of the major problems confronting the Union arise from:

1. The almost miraculous growth of the multiple shop firms with their chains of shops throughout the country.
2. The growing practice on the part of Merchant Tailors, who previously employed skilled handicraft Tailors and Tailoresses to make the trade on the firm's premises, to now have their orders made by factory methods in establishments which specialise on this class of trade.
3. The introduction of machinery, including Hoffman Pressing Machines and Conveyor Belts, and
4. The employment of female workers on work previously done by men at about half the men's rates.

The Union has just arrived at an agreement with the C.W.S. which provides for a normal working week of 45 hours accompanied by minimum rates equal to the wages paid for a 48 hour week in the trade generally. The agreement also provides for higher rates for workers employed on conveyor belts; better holiday provisions etc. The number of factories covered is fourteen—employing approximately 10,000 workers.

THE BOOT AND SHOE OPERATIVES

by

GEORGE CHESTER

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Operatives.

THERE REPOSES IN a specially prepared case at 28, Bedford Square, London, W.C.1, the Central Office of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, a frayed and mildewed document which was the means of calling a Conference held at Stafford on February 2nd, 1874, at which the Union was founded.

Prior to that time small local associations were in existence (some since about 1840) which were loosely federated to the Amalgamated Boot and Shoe Makers' Association, more frequently known as the Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association.

The Association had proved incapable of combating the employers' attacks on the local Unions, or coping with the changing industrial conditions. Factories, and in some cases machinery, were replacing the system of production in the homes of the operatives, which still exists in one or two important centres; young labour and apprentices were being introduced, and in other ways the position of the craft operative was being seriously challenged.

Almost from its inception this new Union took the place which the old Association had occupied. A considerable number of local associations transferred their allegiance to the new Union, and the records which follow clearly

indicate the enthusiasm and virility with which the Union undertook its task.

One circumstance of this early history is worthy of special comment. Its first general secretary, Mr. Thomas Smith, saw the value of Conciliation, and, if necessary, Arbitration, as the alternative to the wasteful tradition of strikes and lock-outs. In February 1877 the first case of its kind was submitted to an independent referee during a four days' sitting of an Arbitration Court. Others followed as the years went by, and thus became established a policy which has been a conspicuous feature of Union policy throughout its history.

Most of the boot production at that time was made up in the homes of the operatives. Generally the uppers and bottom stuff were cut inside the workshop of the employer. The cut uppers were given out to women machinists and returned to the workshop when completed. The uppers and bottom material were given out to riveters in quantities of up to two dozen pairs, who lasted, attached, riveted and heeled the boots, and then returned them to the workshop. Then the boots were again given out to Finishers, who completed the operations and returned the finished article to the workshop ready for despatch.

Obviously such a system led to the piece-work method of wage-payment. The operatives were very largely at the mercy of the employer in regard to price, and other circumstances. Two factors, however, helped the new Union. The operatives, consequent on the craft character of their work, were independent, and the industry was to a very large extent localised.

On its inception the new Union embraced about 35 local associations or branches, three in Scotland, one in Ireland, and the rest scattered from Leeds to Bristol, with Leicester as the largest centre. The national character of the Union was implied, even though it may not have represented a very large percentage of the operatives.

At the first Conference, the old basis of more or less self-autonomous local associations gave place to the

conception of branches acting under national control. The first constitution provided for a General Secretary, an Executive Council, and Agent or Organiser, District Agents, and the development of branches: it also provided for strike or lock-out benefits, travelling assistance, compensation, and a separate sick and funeral section. In the main the early constitution was very similar to that of other craft Unions, and contained the essential principles on which the Union was maintained and developed.

The Union met with a very hostile reception from employers, but gradually it won recognition. In place of individual factory bargaining between the employer and the operative, or the local branch officer, Boards of Arbitration were established in most centres, at which standardised conditions and piece rates were determined. By 1890 the Union had increased its membership to 43,000, its funds to nearly £30,000, its branches to 62 and in many ways had enormously developed the scope and character of its work.

Its success naturally gave rise to local Employers' Associations, and ultimately to a National Employers' Federation, but by 1890 the two bodies had not met in national negotiation. The hostile character of the Employers' Federation had been markedly evident in the advice given to local associations in respect to disputes. Despite the prevalence of conciliation machinery both strikes and lock-outs were frequent. Naturally enough the Union was constantly endeavouring to improve conditions, and in the absence of national machinery this had to be done district by district.

The question of national negotiation came to a head in 1892, when a threatened lock-out by the Northampton Employers, in reply to the Union's claims, was eventually referred to a joint Conference of nine representatives from either side. The questions before the Conference, from which arose the first national decisions and agreements affecting the industry as a whole, were:

Or

Workmen's Questions.

- (1) A uniform meal hour for Northampton.
- (2) A 54-hour week as the maximum.
- (3) The advance (if any) to be given to the Clickers and Pressmen at Northampton.
- (4) The advisability of regulating the number of boys to be employed in the various departments, in proportion to the number of men engaged.

Employers' Questions.

- (1) Prevention of a strike or lock-out without prior resort to arbitration.
- (2) Fixing of a period of notice before variation of the existing terms or regulations.
- (3) Regulations for indoor workers.
- (4) Uniform enforcement of regulations upon non-associated employers and work-people.
- (5) Any other reasonable question submitted by either side.

In the event of a disagreement on all or any of the above questions, the referee to have absolute power to decide.

The Conference eventually agreed to a uniform meal hour, a 54-hour working week, an increased minimum wage at 26s. per week for Clickers, 22s. for Pressmen and rules for procedure in industrial disputes.

The question of boy labour only was referred to a referee, and his award gave a ratio of one boy (under 18) to every three men (over 18).

Despite this first successful attempt at national negotiation, considerable unrest prevailed. Indoor employment was rapidly developing, involving sharply contrasted working conditions, and machinery was being used more and more. The Union met the changing circumstances by reinforcing its local organisation, and extending its national policy. Further joint national Conferences were held in 1892 and 1894, out of which further successes were achieved. In

November 1894 the Employers' Federation astounded the industry by demanding the Union's acceptance or rejection, within eleven days, of seven proposals, which would, in the opinion of the Union, completely stop future progress and wipe out the successes of previous years. The proposals were rejected. In March 1895 the Employers declared a lock-out of the whole of the industry. The lock-out lasted six weeks, and from it emerged an agreement, known as the 'Terms of Settlement, 1895', which has ever since formed the basis for the working conditions in the industry.

One feature of the settlement, probably unique in the history of Trade Unionism, was the establishment of a Guarantee Fund of £2,000, by Trust Deed, out of which damages could be awarded to either side in respect to violation of the Terms of Settlement, particularly in regard to disputes. The Union was not to declare a strike on a Federated Employer, nor could a Federated Employer lock-out his operatives without contravening the agreement. If a strike did occur the Union was allowed three days to settle the difficulty before any claim for damages could be made under the Trust Deed. In most instances the conciliation machinery was sufficient to settle such difficulties within the prescribed period. As was to be expected, the balance of successful claims on the Trust Fund favoured the Employers. The establishment of the Guarantee Fund was very much questioned, and has since been the subject of criticism, but its influence may be judged by the fact that since its adoption no national strike or lock-out has taken place, and national negotiations have been regular, conciliatory and progressive.

The position of the Union following the lock-out was critical. Funds were practically exhausted, unemployment was rife, and membership began to waver. Fortunately trade was better in 1896-7, and recovery made possible. A quarterly levy of 1s. per member was introduced in addition to the weekly contribution of 6d., and by the end of 1899, that is, twenty-five years after the inauguration

of the Union, the total funds stood at £44,000, and membership at 32,084.

In 1900, the Union settled down to reconstruct its constitution. A full-time General President had previously been established, and in 1902 the General Executive Council was increased from five to eight members, and the organisation of local branches was strengthened to cope with the growth of machine production. All local officers were operatives employed in the industry, and many of them were constantly subject to victimisation. The Union proceeded, therefore, to the election of full-time Branch Officers wherever the membership and funds of local branches permitted. These officers were generally termed secretaries, but their duties consisted largely in interviewing employers, arranging piece-work rates, organising membership, developing the work of Arbitration Boards, etc. The local branches had always embraced the whole of the operatives in the district, but later, in certain districts, it was found necessary to divide the branches into certain grades of operatives, each with officers knowing intimately the character of the industrial work involved. The mechanisation of the industry had largely restricted it to certain localities, chiefly in the Midlands.

Thus for example it became possible to have three separate branches at Leicester, two at Northampton, two at Kettering, etc., each with separate full-time Branch Officers. Meanwhile the national side of the movement was not being neglected. Agitation was proceeding for the adoption of minimum rates by the local Boards of Arbitration. It was not, however, until 1909 that this was accomplished, when joint negotiations with the Employers' Federation secured a scale of minimum rates for male operatives, commencing at 18s. per week at 18 years, rising to 30s. at 21 years, together with a reduction in working hours from 54 to 52½ per week. These were embodied in what was known as 'The Supplemental Terms of Settlement'. By 1914 national minimum scales had been

fixed for women, the male rates extended, overtime regulations introduced, uniformity of labour conditions applied, and numerous safeguards introduced to regularise working conditions. The National Agreement became supplemental to the Terms of Settlement. At the moment our National Agreement provides for (a) a Joint Sub-Committee which deals by frequent meetings with the application of the agreement throughout the Industry, (b) a working week of 46 hours, to be reduced to 45 in June 1938, (c) a contributory scheme of holidays with pay, (d) regulation of boy labour, (e) full payment for all output under both time and piece-work, (f) cost of living sliding scale of minimum wages for males from 13s. at 15 years to 56s. at 22, rising to 58s. in June 1938, for women 13s. at 15 years to 37s. at 20, rising to 38s. in June 1938, (g) procedure for Conciliation and Arbitration Boards, (h) not less than 25 per cent over the minimum rates for piece-workers, etc. etc.

The Agreement provides for amendment or termination each two years, and regularly its provisions are jointly discussed and augmented.

The Agreement is implemented locally by the Conciliation and Arbitration Boards, which formulate the piece-work statements for the whole district covered by the Board, and consider all complaints. Each Board operates through a central joint committee, with sub-committees for particular departments. Unsettled difficulties are referred to two independent arbitrators, and, if that fails, to an independent umpire, usually appointed by the Ministry of Labour.

To a large extent the main responsibility of the Boards has been the fixing of piece-work prices. In the early days the price covered the craft job of a completed operation. Today the price is generally one of a minute sectional operation, and each department of the trade demands hundreds of separate prices. With the rapid sequence of styles and patterns, particularly of ladies' footwear, the work of pricing operations places an almost

endless burden on Branch Officers and Arbitration Boards. From a hand home craft, to which considerable technical pride and skill was given, the production of boots and shoes has become one of the most highly mechanised industrial occupations.

The constitution of the Union provides for a Biennial Conference. There are two full-time national officers, a General President and a General Secretary, four full-time National Organisers, and four Area Officers. An Executive Council of thirteen members, elected on a geographical basis, in addition to the National Officers and Organisers, meets monthly for the determination of Union business. Considerable power of control is vested in the Executive Council, which is also the national negotiating body. Branches are established wherever possible, and the policy has always been so to organise a branch as to make it possible to employ a full-time officer. A branch may consist, therefore, of a number of sections within a particular district. At the moment there are 70 branches, 25 of which are employing 56 full-time Officers. Many branches have a membership of several thousands—for instance Higham and Rushden, 8,811, Leicester No. 1., 7,000, the Leicester Women's Branch (composed entirely of women, with four full-time women officers), 5,657, Norwich No. 1. Branch, 5,900, etc. Prior to 1934 branches retained a proportion of membership contributions for branch purposes, but in that year the whole finance of the Union was centralised. Branch Officers are approved by a kind of half-way house between election by ballot and appointment. Nominations are made at branch meetings, each nominee being orally examined by a sub-committee of the Executive Council and the Branch Committee, and those who are judged fitted for the post are submitted to a ballot vote of the members. The practice is not entirely satisfactory, and sooner or later selection and appointment will prevail. Each officer holds office for four years following election.

Departmental shop-stewards exist in most factories and

this not only ensures maximum membership but reduces violation of the industrial conditions to a minimum.

The membership contribution for men is 1s. per week, and for women 6d. per week. For this the Union provides industrial service, sickness, funeral and out-of-work benefits, strike or dispute pay, victimisation and travelling assistance, legal aid both in respect to Workmen's Compensation and cases arising at Common Law, etc. The Union has an approved Society under the National Health Insurance Acts and administers the Unemployment Insurance Acts for the whole of its members. The Union has three Parliamentary Agents, and a relatively good percentage of contracting-in membership. The present membership is 85,794, and this number, bearing in mind the membership of the Rossendale Slipper Workers' Union, represents a very high percentage of the productive operatives. The Union has accumulated funds of £542,116, and during the course of its history has expended over £2,500,000 in benevolent benefits alone.

It is often wrongly assumed that the enormous increase in production (between 1907 and 1935 the average output per operative increased by over 66 per cent) is attributable to the piece-work policy of the Union. Outside the clicking department practically every operation is a mechanised one, many of them practically automatic in character. The capacity of the machine largely determines the output, and under piecework the operative is assured of payment for all such output, at a price greatly in excess of wages obtainable under daywork rates. Mechanisation of the industry, though it appears to have reached saturation point, will go even further. New and simplified machinery, rendering greater individual production, will evolve, intensifying competition.

At the moment, however, the Union is well on top of its job. Its membership is keen, virile, and conscious of its power, larger in real numbers than at any time in the history of the Union; its officers are efficient and enthusiastic; its financial resources greater than ever before;

and its machinery so perfected and adjusted as to give the utmost service to every problem and phase of the Union's work.

The Union has as its motto 'Service to its Members' and in the industrial conditions it has established, the principles it has followed, and the advantages which membership gives it can well look forward to the final service, that of controlling the Industry in the interests of the community.

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE POTTERIES

by

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TRADE UNION HISTORY in the Potteries can best be presented in two distinct periods, separated by the outbreak of war in 1914. Pre-war attempts at organisation among pottery workers were sporadic, but at times persistent. There were numerous strikes, which were mainly failures leading to victimisation. During and after the war, the situation changes. But, however disappointing were the successive attempts at organisation in the pre-war period, it is vital to study these gropings after unity in order to appreciate fully the post-war success in organising so scattered an industry—for, despite the major concentration in the Six Towns now called 'The Potteries', the rest of the industry is very widely dispersed.

Despite the many technical strides made in the manufacture of pottery, mainly through the genius of Josiah Wedgwood in the eighteenth century, there was no fundamental change in the status of workers in the Pottery Factory, or 'Manufactory', as it came to be called instead of 'Pot-works'. The workers had their wages regulated as journeymen either under the Master and Servant Act or, as one-time apprentices, under the Apprentices Act. They were often tyrannically treated by their masters, many of whom employed as many as 600 in a single manufactory. At the latter end of the eighteenth century

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workers were 'hired' at so much, and if dissatisfied, they left. If the master was dissatisfied, he 'fired' his journeymen and apprentices. Collectively the workers had no remedy but to grumble and sometimes riot and revolt.

In the eighteenth century the Master Potters overtly combined to raise the prices of commodities. Probably the dissatisfied pottery workers sometimes met secretly to discuss the possibilities of improving their wages and conditions, especially under the threat of mechanisation of processes, which was coming about as early as the latter decades of the century.

This secret combination of pottery workers must have been going on, even while the drastic Combination Acts were on the statute book from 1799 to 1824. In 1802 Richard Brinsley Sheridan, M.P. for Stafford, introduced a Bill for lessening the number of apprentices, with special reference to potteries. This suggests that the pottery workers had conducted a secret agitation and had approached him. They must have persisted in their agitation; for, though defeated in 1802, Sheridan returned to the fight in 1814. His eloquent appeal was again fruitless, and the Statute of Apprentices was repealed. Petitions against the repeal had been signed by over 2,000 persons. From 1815 to 1824 we find the pottery workers joining in the political agitation which followed the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, and linking up with the Hampden Clubs and Union Societies. Just as Manchester had its pitched fight with militia, dragoons and special constables, so also did the Potteries have a battle royal at Swan Bank. Itinerant orators from Birmingham and Manchester were blamed and imprisoned for these disturbances; but the truth was that the Potters, encouraged by the discontented 'Potteries and North Midland Miners', were getting politically conscious. This was excellent preparation for industrial organisation, when the time and legal opportunity came in 1824.

The Potters' Trade Union history up to the Great War falls into three stages: (a) 1824-31, (b) 1831-50, (c) 1850 to the decade which opens with the Great War.

(a) 1824-31. The Potters set up two distinct Unions. One was the Union of Clay Potters, covering the crafts handling 'clay' in its earliest stages of manufacture—by Throwers, Turners, Handlers, and Hollow-Ware Pressers. The other was the Printers' Union, embracing all who decorated the finished ware by means of transfers printed from copper plates. These two small craft Unions left a large number unorganised; but they were courageous, and in 1825 engaged in the first official Trade Union strike. They were hopelessly beaten by the much better organised Pottery Manufacturers. From 1825 to 1831 their leaders, though victimised, maintained contact with the national organisations which were attempting to unify the Trade Union movement. In 1830 a Conference was held in the Potteries under the auspices of the National Association for the Protection of Labour; and this led to the formation of a local China and Earthenware Turners' Society. This was really a revival of a type of purely craft and local Union like those smashed in 1825. Not until 1831 do we get the first national organisation.

(b) 1831-50. This was the heroic period in the history of pottery organisation—the age of 'Robert Owenism'. Under Owen's inspiration the Potters attempted great things, and, of course, they failed, not because of Owen, but because the opposition of the Manufacturers was too strong, even for their new national organisation.

In 1831, under the inspiration of the N.A.P.L., the Potters organised the National Union of Operative Potters. The Union covered all pottery workers, including workers from the 'Out-Potteries', as they were then called, outside the Six Towns. In 1834 and 1836 the two bitterest strikes in the history of the industry were fought and lost. The membership of the National Union of Operative Potters reached 8,000 in 1833, and Robert Owen, in a report to the Co-operative Congress, ranked it higher than that of the Builders' Union. Owen personally visited the Potteries, and inspired the workers to start a Co-operative Pottery, which later was a failure. He got the officials of

the National Union to send delegates to his Grand National Consolidated Trades Union.

In the strikes of 1834 and 1836, the N.U.O.P. overestimated its own strength as much as it underestimated the opposition of the organised manufacturers. Consequently, from 1836 to 1850 Trade Unionism in The Potteries retreated into its local shell. The Potters were kept together under the capable and often queer leadership of another Welshman, William Evans, who became the editor of one of the finest journals in Trade Union literature. After 1836 there was the usual victimisation of leaders, William Evans among them. In 1843 he and a few enthusiasts started a 'New Union' (to distinguish it from the old Union of 1836) under the title, the 'United Branches of Operative Potters'. This was really a revival or federation of the fragments of the old Union, which were still intact in the 'Out-Potteries', where the force of the strike defeat was not felt so much as in the Six Towns. This significant fact explains the establishment of *The Pottery Examiner and Workmen's Advocate*, which formed a link between the old leaders, victimised in The Potteries and the 'Out-Potteries', left virile and intact. Evans managed to keep his United Branches of Operative Potters active from 1843 to 1850. About 1845 he had a bee in his bonnet about colonisation and emigration as a cure for the unemployment caused by machinery. His enthusiasm led him to organise an Emigration of Potters Society, with a kind of lottery or distribution of shares to lucky members. In 1848 he changed the name of his journal to *The Pottery Examiner and Emigrants' Advocate*, but everything went wrong with his emigration scheme, and in 1851 the paper ceased publication. No more was heard of Evans or of the United Branches of Operative Potters, which had begun to decline when the Emigration Society was set on foot.

Under Evans's guidance the U.B.O.P. was non-militant: he advocated no general strikes, but only local 'turn-outs' at separate factories. His organisation was not merely

local. It attempted to keep intact a form of national organisation by embracing Potters, both within the Six Towns and in the 'Out-Potteries'. Evans even linked it with the National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour, and the National Association of United Trades for the Employment of Labour. He was himself a prominent delegate in 1845 at the London Conference, out of which these organisations grew. He achieved nothing great, but he kept alive a tradition of Trade Union activity on a national scale.

(c) 1850-1914. After the disappearance of the *Pottery Examiner* organisation again became purely local. In 1854 the need was felt for some national link; and *The Potter* was started. It was poor compared with its predecessor. In 1863 it was merged into the more ambitious *Potteries Examiner* which was more of a newspaper than its predecessors. It was edited by another enthusiastic Welshman, William Owen, whose one 'bee' was arbitration. This journal circulated among the separate and purely local groups which remained of the U.B.O.P. From 1867 to 1883 the policy of arbitration was tried in all disputes, and a Joint Board of Conciliation and Arbitration was set up as a permanent body. It worked fairly satisfactorily for minor disputes, but failed on major wage-issues. The Potters' branches lost faith in arbitration as early as 1883. They felt that awards either gave them 'half a loaf as better than nothing', or tended to be settled by the Umpire, who weighted his decision in the employers' favour. The Joint Board lingered on till 1892, when it was dissolved. Meantime, the local branches had set up in 1883 a new national organisation—the National Order of Potters. There had been no national link since Owen's new *Potteries Examiner* had ceased publication in 1880. A defeat of the Potters in 1881 over a strike against the Umpire's award accounts for this revival of national organisation. The National Order of Potters was to embrace the whole industry. It was thus an 'industrial' and not a mere special 'craft' association. It survived until

1898, and then collapsed and was merged into one of the bigger craft organisations—the Hollow-Ware Pressers' Union, which had a larger craft' membership than the N.O.P., though it catered for all grades of workers.

Soon after 1898 the local craft Unions such as the Throwers, Turners' and Handlers' Society, the Operative Sanitary Pressers' Association, and the Jet and Rockingham Workmen's Society dissolved. In 1906 we get three craft organisations, the Amalgamated Society of Hollow-Ware Pressers, the China Potters' Federation, and the Printers and Transferrers' Society uniting to form the National Amalgamated Society of Male and Female Pottery Workers. In 1907-8 this body was joined by 'Out-Pottery' Unions in Scotland, Bristol and London. In the post-war period it held the field and swallowed up all local and craft rivals

During the war over 3,000 operative potters were called to the Services. This depleted the funds of the smaller craft organisations. The influx of women as war substitutes gave the National Amalgamated Society its chance, and in 1916 it appointed a special Woman Organiser. Numbers were increased by the institution, in this year, of a special scheme of canvassers and collectors, which is still in operation. The 'Political Fund' appears as a separate item in the balance-sheet for the first time in this year. In 1917 the National Amalgamated Society discontinued its Health Insurance Scheme, which it had valiantly attempted to organise since 1912. In 1918 it adopted its present name—the National Society of Pottery Workers. Early in 1920 the Packers' Society and the United Ovenmen's Society decided to amalgamate with it. Thus for the first time all the craft Unions were absorbed in a national organisation. The society reached its peak membership of 43,821 in 1920. Thereafter it suffered badly during the post-war slump. Membership fell, first after the national strike in 1921, and later after the General Strike of 1926. The lowest point was in 1934. Since then there has been a great drive for membership, which has

doubled, regaining a total of over 30,000 in 1938. Since 1921 there has been a special juvenile section, which has now about 2,000 members. Since 1916 female has exceeded male membership. In 1937 there were about 17,000 women members, and about 11,000 men.

The Society is ruled by an Annual Delegate Conference of representatives from each local Lodge. There are 25 Lodges, 7 in the Potteries, and 18 in the 'Out-Potteries' of England and Scotland. There is a National Executive Council which meets quarterly, and a General Secretary, assisted by 6 National Organisers, one of whom is a woman. District Committees are made up from Lodges within each District and meet monthly. Each Lodge has a President and a Secretary, with sometimes an Assistant, when membership reaches a certain number.

There is a varying scale of contributions and benefits. Adult males pay 1s. per week, male apprentices 6d. Females over 18 pay 5d., under 18, 4d. Juveniles under 16 pay 2d. Today there are only two cash benefits—Out-of-Work and Strike or Lock-Out Pay. The old pre-war friendly benefit society ideas, such as marriage dowry or death and funeral benefit, have disappeared. The National Society of Pottery Workers is more an industrial organisation concentrating on trade benefits than a friendly benefit society, like the earlier small craft organisations. It spends considerable sums in fighting for compensation for injured members and those afflicted with industrial diseases, such as Silicosis or Lead Poisoning. It has its own legal and medical advisers for these purposes.

For a time the Society had a scholarship scheme at Ruskin College. Then it had an educational scheme with the Local District of the Workers' Educational Association. Both these schemes had to be abandoned during the post-war slump. Occasional grants are made to assist applicants holding scholarships at Ruskin. The Society now pays only a nominal affiliation fee to the W.E.A.

Since 1917 there has been a strong National Joint Industrial Council of the Pottery Industry, representing

workers and employers equally, with a few honorary and co-opted members. This was the first of its kind in Great Britain. It has provided useful statistics of imports and exports, production and profits, and has done good work in research, accident prevention, and 'safety first'. On several occasions since 1917 it has successfully resolved a deadlock in a wage dispute, without strike or lock-out.

The N.S.P.W. is affiliated to the Labour Party, the T.U.C., and the G.F.T.U. Its two post-war General Secretaries have been Labour M.P.s for Hanley. It is also affiliated to the International Federation of Pottery Workers, which has been rebuilt since the difficulties created by the war.

The Society now seems firmly established as a united amalgamation, all smaller craft organisations having been swallowed up or brushed aside. It has withstood the post-war slump, and is definitely on the up-grade at present, as the rapid growth of membership during the past few years suffices to show.

The extraordinary leap in the membership of the National Society of Pottery Workers during the last year (1937-8) may have been the direct result of the adoption of a scheme of Holidays with Pay. This was concluded by mutual agreement between the N.S.P.W. and the British Pottery Manufacturers' Federation in April 1937. It came into operation in Bank Holiday Week 1937. It applied to 75,000 employees throughout the industry, and the cost is entirely borne by the employers. A scale is adopted according to age groups, the maximum payment being £3 for males and 30s. for females. There were slight difficulties with some small firms over the scheme; and threats of isolated strikes were made in 1937, when the Holidays with Pay scheme was not strictly adhered to. But negotiation by the Trade Union officers soon closed the disputes satisfactorily.

It is too early yet to assess the influence of the Holidays with Pay scheme in all its industrial and social aspects; but it is safe to surmise that the granting of the scheme has given the Union a lever to raise its membership.

TRADE UNIONISM IN AGRICULTURE

by

J. POINTING

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IN AGRICULTURE THE centuries do not succeed one another; they lie side by side. Highly organised farms such as we know in Britain co-exist with peasants' strips and open field cultivations, as in parts of Poland, which are as they were in mediæval times.

In many countries, the land still is cultivated only to feed those who live on it. But in highly-industrialised countries conditions have undergone rapid and sweeping changes. In these countries are the smallest agricultural populations, and the largest percentages of landless wage-earners. In Britain, some 60 per cent of those who live by the industry are workers of this type. In peasant countries the percentage may be only ten. It is low also in newly-settled countries.

But whatever the form of agriculture, there is everywhere a shrinkage in the rural population, most acute in highly-industrialised countries. In Britain, labour was long so cheap that it could be used wastefully, and the effects of the rural exodus have become obvious only in the last few years, because a good deal of casual Irish labour has been used in the past. But today the unattractiveness of agriculture to labour must be faced.

Why this flight from the land? Not chiefly because of a preference for urban ways of life, for the amenities previously confined to the towns have in many cases

spread to country districts. It is rather that the feudal spirit still dominates rural life. In urban industry, the wage-earner makes what at least appears to the agricultural worker a *free contract*. He sells only his labour. This forms a strong contrast to the 'master-servant' relationship which still persists on farms and gives the employer rights to dictate how and where the 'servant' shall live, and how he shall spend his time.

This relationship is more obvious in 'backward' countries than in Britain. But signs of it still mark the conditions of British farm labour. Because of it, employers have refused holidays and have tied job and house together. Rural Trade Unions came into being to destroy these characteristics of the labour contract. Indeed, the feudal spirit is most easily to be seen in the opposition of farming employers to Trade Unionism. Not until after the Great War did farm workers in many European countries gain the legal right to form Unions *even though these rights were accorded to industrial workers*. And a chief complaint in all countries—including Britain—is the treatment of farm workers *as a class apart*. They were left out of social legislation: ignored in Acts dealing with child labour, workmen's compensation, and unemployment. At International Labour Conferences every possible obstacle has been raised, first to any discussion of agricultural conditions, and—when that failed—to any discussion likely to lead to effective decisions.

The sufferings of the village poor in Britain during the nineteenth century were the inevitable climax of the process by which small farmers, cottagers, and squatters—mainly by enclosures of small farms and common lands—had been turned into landless labourers, with nothing but a meagre and irregular wage. By this means the independent spirit of the poor had been broken. Even their liberty had been curtailed by Acts of Settlement, which tied them to their own villages. By the beginning of the century the farm labourers of England had presented a lamentable spectacle. Proper wages had been made impossible because almost everywhere the miserable sums which the farmers

paid were made up out of the rates. Only so was it possible for the labourers' families to exist at all. The degradation which this involved did irreparable harm to rural life. It embittered relations and led to the ever-increasing severity of the law. Food riots broke out. In 1816 there had been a peasants' revolt, for which five men and boys were hung, and five transported for life. The choice before the labourer was to starve or steal; if he stole, the penalties were ferocious.

From such a rural England the first movement towards rural Trade Unionism came. The interest of history has centred on the formation in 1833 of an actual Union, by the six men of Dorset. For what *The Times* called "that criminal and fearful spirit of combination" these men were transported overseas; but they were not the least fortunate of those who had dared to make a stand. After a labourers' revolt in 1830, in which not a single person had been killed or seriously injured, nine men and boys were hung, 400 imprisoned, and 457 transported overseas.

This savagery killed rural Trade Unionism for many years. But in the 1860's there were again many small county Unions and more public sympathy was with them. A churchman, Canon Girdlestone, took up leadership in the movement, and though his attitude was in strong contrast to the attitude of most priests and parsons, the Catholic Cardinal Manning and the Nonconformist Spurgeon came out for Joseph Arch when he began in 1872 the first national Union.

Arch's Union did not last, but it did great work. The problem of surplus labour it tackled by emigration: some 700,000 persons went to the new countries by its aid. It improved wages. It demanded the franchise and land nationalisation.

Hostility from the farmers was implacable. Strikes occurred, and strike-breaking was the answer. The Union could not survive internal dissensions and serious farming depression. Moreover the vote was at last conceded to the farm workers in 1884, and ten years later came the system

of local government for which they had agitated and in which Union men have taken an active part ever since. A feeling spread that the work was done.

But in the 1890's there was a fillip given to rural Trade Unionism by support from town Unions. The Dockers' Union did some organising work in 1890 and the Workers' Union in 1899. George Edwards, who had been in Arch's Union, was active in a Norfolk breakaway which lasted till 1896. But rural Unions were small and scattered; by 1900 there was practically none remaining.

But though Arch's building had been destroyed, the spirit he had engendered did not die. In 1906 the workers came to Edwards and begged him to begin again. He did. Once more the influence of Primitive Methodism and simple religion was strong. A principal object of the new Union was "to improve the social and moral condition of its members". But its work in raising wages was urgently necessary, for cash wages on English farms were stated to be from 11s. to 15s. for a working week of up to 70 hours.

The movement spread from Norfolk into many counties. In 1910, also, the Workers' Union—which has since merged into the Transport Workers' Union—began again to work in rural areas. In 1912 the Scottish Farm Servants (now a section of the same Union) was formed.

The Union founded by George Edwards—now the National Union of Agricultural Workers—was in early days chiefly inspired, as was rural Trade Unionism generally, by sentiments appropriate to Liberalism. But a great strike in Norfolk in 1910, when the county wage was 13s., led to a reconstruction, and the leaders turned to Labour. Ever since, there has been loyal support of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party, though probably the votes of farm workers are votes rather for the workers' own candidates than for socialism in farming or industrial life.

The formation of these Unions was the third movement to establish rural Trade Unionism on a permanent foundation. It succeeded for several reasons, not least the devotion

and courage of the leaders, and the help given by other Unions. But the conditions which these rural Unions had to face were entirely different from those which confronted Arch. The last quarter of the nineteenth century had produced great changes. Some were due to industrial expansion and the development of steamships and railways. Refrigeration made overseas farmers the competitors of home producers. Improvements in the technique of farming and growing use of machinery also had their effect. The productivity of labour was greatly increased, and this, coupled with gradually rising wage-rates, brought about a steady reduction in the number of workers. That fall still continues. The rural population of England and Wales fell from one-third of the whole in 1871 to one-fifth in 1931. Male labour in agriculture fell by 17 per cent between 1923 and 1937.

The rise in productivity itself disguised the effect of this change. It has made the Unions' task of wage-raising easier. But it is impossible not to share the general concern about the labour supply, especially having regard to the way in which youth is deserting the land. The present farmers' leaders recognise the seriousness of the problem. They now admit that substantially higher wages are an essential step to making farming life more attractive.

Had this been their attitude earlier there would have been no need for the strikes for better wages immediately before, as well as during and after, the Great War. But the general practice of farmers, themselves powerfully organised, has been to concede nothing, except under compulsion. It needed the bribe of a subsidy on corn to secure, during the War, the Minimum Wage Act for which rural Trade Unionism had been consistently working. But when the subsidy was stopped in 1921 the Wages Board was abolished. The conciliation committees which were substituted proved a complete failure. Only a great strike in Norfolk in 1923 prevented a return to wages as bad as in pre-war days.

It became clear that the State would have to intervene again; and the Labour Government in 1924 legislated for a minimum wage. Most unfortunately the Act was badly mangled by anti-Government amendments. The 1917 Act gave the power of fixing rates to a Central Board, on which the workers' leaders could adequately present their case. Some steps were thus taken towards a national basis for the wage. This is essential if a living wage is to be obtained. But the present Act leaves the fixing of rates to County Committees which are really weighted against the workers and are without a common principle.

The constitution of the Wages Board and of the Committees is important for two reasons. First, the Act for England and Wales became the model for similar Acts elsewhere. The Scottish Farm Workers unsuccessfully opposed inclusion in the first Wages Act, but they got special arrangements for Scotland included. Those arrangements did not work satisfactorily, and they therefore decided against being included in the Act of 1924. But Trade Union organisation in Scotland could not sufficiently protect wages without some such machinery, and an Act covering Scotland was passed in 1937. There is a similar system now in Eire, and probably the North of Ireland will follow, a committee having been set up to consider proposals for a wage-fixing system.

Secondly, a demand is growing that the many subsidies which are being given to farmers by the Government should not be offered without a satisfactory wage being paid. The Government have hitherto resisted attempts made by Labour M.P.s to link subsidies and wages, but the New Zealand Government have accepted the fact that if they regulate farming prices they must regulate wages accordingly. The British Government's control of food production and sale, too, is bound to extend, and it is not unlikely that in future they will have to be much more definite as to the basis on which *minimum* wages are to be fixed. A national Wages Board might then become the one authority for this purpose, and the present County Committees would

be abolished. This should leave the Unions of employers and workers to deal with actual wages, and the Wages Board to deal with legal minima—unless and until agreements reached are legally enforceable over the whole industry.

The Wage Act, however, with all its faults, has helped to give status to rural Trade Unionism, in that on all the committees, every seat for the workers' side is occupied by a Union man. Wages have been raised, and hours which count for the minimum wage much reduced. An example of the better rates can be taken from Holland (Lincs.) where the rate for ordinary workers is 37*s.* 6*d.* for 48 hours winter and 50 hours summer, and for horsemen, working customary hours, 47*s.* 6*d.* Rents are low; for cottages belonging to farmers the charge is limited to 3*s.* a week or less, in most cases. Farmers claim they pay above minimum rates generally, though the thousands of cases detected each year of payments below the minimum cast doubt on this.

Women workers, who number about one in ten of the regular workers, receive about 6*d.* an hour. In most areas the employment of women is not encouraged by Trade Unionists, as it tends to depress wages. Nor is the employment of children anywhere approved, though it still continues in part-time and seasonal labour. An ever-increasing value is being given to education. In England and Wales, especially, the standard of rural teaching is distinctly below the towns and Trade Unionists are trying to get it raised. They offer strong opposition to farmers' attempts to limit rural elementary education so as to force boys, particularly, on to the land.

The minimum wage in Eire is now 27*s.* for 54 hours, except in County Dublin. Scottish wage-rates had fallen badly before a Wages Board was introduced there. In 1936 the Scottish Farm Servants gave evidence showing married ploughmen's rates as 29*s.* 3*d.* in Aberdeenshire, 33*s.* to 34*s.* in Angusshire, and 31*s.* 3*d.* in Dumfriesshire. In Scotland up to a third of the total wage was paid in kind.

Employers say that the families get better food this way, but the workers declare that the wages in kind are valued too highly. So Trade Union effort, as in England and Wales, has aimed at, and been successful in, limiting the number of 'benefits and advantages' such as milk and potatoes given in lieu of cash wages, and in having the value of these clearly stated in the Wages Orders. In Orders now being made, to cover certain districts of Scotland, inclusive minimum rates for "ordinary" men vary from 33s. 6d. to 36s. 6d. Dairymen and shepherds go up to 42s. 6d.; cattle-men and ploughmen to 40s.

Another great advance secured by the Unions in post-war years is that the principle of holidays with pay is recognised. Nearly all workers get a half holiday each week, mostly Saturday, and nearly all get paid for one to six Bank Holidays in the year. Pressure is also being steadily exerted towards annual holidays with pay. A lead in this direction has been given on farms belonging to the Co-operative movement.

The system by which stockmen, horsemen, and shepherds engage by the year or half-year is extensively practised still in Scotland, and in parts of England—mainly in the North. But it is fast dying out.

The Unions' aim is to make a week of 48 hours, with payment for overtime, the basis of all labour contracts, and more and more this principle is being adopted.

A long agitation for the inclusion of agriculture in unemployment insurance was the main urge behind the Act of 1936 which extended this insurance to farm, garden and estate workers. A second agitation has been concerned with the improvement of housing and water supply. In England the standard of rural housing is low; in Scotland it is lower, and the conditions there for the single men who live on farm premises has produced strong language even in an official report. The Government have faced the fact that they were mistaken in practically stopping the building of new cottages other than replacements of condemned or overcrowded property; and they are now

to give again the special subsidies which the Labour Government provided and without which it is impossible to erect new cottages at rents which farm workers can pay.

The tied cottage has been a grave obstacle to Trade Unionism. About 60 per cent of English farm cottages are tied, and about 97 per cent of Scottish. Large numbers of farm workers have no protection—not even that of the Rent Acts—against summary eviction. ‘Abolition of the tied cottage’ is regarded by most land workers as a necessary prelude to strong Trade Unionism.

When it is remembered how isolated the farm worker may be, it is remarkable that there should be so much independence as there is. About a third of those regularly employed have been members of a Trade Union at some time since the war, though there has been a heavy falling off during the recent lean years. Happily, membership has taken an upward turn again.

Trade Union contributions from agriculture must of necessity be low. That for the National Union of Agricultural Workers is only 4*d.* a week. Yet on this a head office staff and sixteen organisers are employed; a costly legal department is maintained; victimisation, strike, accident and funeral benefits are given, and a monthly journal goes to every member.

In the future the farm worker will be as unlike his forbears as the combine-harvester is unlike a reaping-hook. Food-production, in technique, in marketing, and in distribution, is undergoing great transformations. The new worker—alert, adaptable, highly skilled—will obtain conditions of employment comparable with those of skilled urban workers. Rural Trade Unionism has already carried him a long way; perhaps he himself hardly realises how far.

If Government control develops, as it will, Trade Unionism may be recognised still further, but the developments may not be such as Union members would desire. Therefore, Trade Unionism needs to spread as quickly as possible, so that it can have a voice in the coming changes.

This requires financial resources beyond the means of the existing Unions. Moreover, questions of redundancy and overlapping on the part of the Unions must be faced. No doubt all this would settle itself somehow, if it were not tackled according to some plan and purpose; but the settlement so reached will be the least satisfactory. That is why it should be an immediate concern of the whole Labour movement.

THE GENERAL WORKERS

by

THE RT. HON. J. R. CLYNES, M.P.

Past President, National Union of General and Municipal Workers.

SOME YEARS BEFORE the establishment in 1889 of my own Trade Union valiant efforts were made by a few men to organise General Workers and Labourers. The few went in fear and their efforts failed. Dismissal and other forms of victimisation were the effective weapons of hostile employers.

In 1881 two or three labourers resolved to walk from Birmingham to London and get employment there at a big Gas Works. One of these men was Will Thorne. Their tramp was an ordeal of privation and physical suffering. They endured and arrived. Before long they got work.

Their purpose in relation to a Trade Union was scarcely based upon a plan. The plan emerged from their determination. They showed drive and made fervent appeals to their fellows. The peak point of their efforts was reached when they decided at an open-air meeting to start the Gas Workers' Union. Buckets and other vessels had to be borrowed to hold the first contributions that were thrown into pails when the few leaders improvised arrangements to collect names and get ready for contribution cards; 2d. a week was the payment and entrance fee 1s.

In addition to Will Thorne, prominent men who aided in different degrees were Ben Tillett, Tom Mann, and John Burns. Will Thorne was soon appointed the first Secretary and for nearly forty-five years kept his post with little challenge. At the age of seventy-seven, when

still a Member of Parliament, he retired full of dignity and honour, and with the sustained praises of all his colleagues.

The immediate cause of sweeping and far-reaching success was the action of employers in compelling men to work in many cases 18 hours at a stretch. It was the last straw, and revolt against it broke the tyranny which men had long to undergo, and an eight-hour day took the place of a normal twelve-hour shift.

This kind of bitter experience in which Labourers particularly had to shoulder some new and intolerable burden has often been the cause of driving men to organise.

In any account of the formation and rise of General Workers' Unions, the old Gas Workers' Union must rank among the first. It has undergone many changes in management and executive function. It has changed its name with great alterations in membership and occupational development. If I give it a prior place I do not forget that the Dockers' Union started about the same time and has undergone like transformation and is now the massive Transport and General Workers' Union.

These two organisations are the premier societies now existing to cover all classes of General Workers who have not separate Unions specially to cater for them. The joint strength of these organisations exceeds a million members. They have in the last twenty years absorbed a score or more of other Trade Unions which included workmen who to a great extent follow similar occupations. In no case where amalgamation has been arranged has any desire been shown to revert to a previous position of isolation. Outside these two large Unions there remain a few smaller kindred Unions covering a combined membership of several thousands.

A stage was reached in 1917 where nearly all the General Workers and Labourers' Unions formed themselves into a Federation of General Workers. This step was taken to some extent because of conditions created in industry during the years of the war. After the war, I became

President of the Federation, and held that position until it was dissolved. It covered many a useful purpose and provided a most serviceable medium for enabling the Unions to make common cause on both wage questions and the matters of general Industrial interest.

The following Unions were members of the Federation:

National Amalgamated Union of Labour.

National Union of General Workers.

Public Works and Constructional Operatives' Union.
Workers' Union.

National Amalgamated Union of Enginemmen, Firemen,
Mechanics, Motormen and Electrical Workers.

Scottish Union of Dock Labourers.

Municipal Employees' Association.

Transport and General Workers' Union.

The Federation acted as a consultative and informing body on subjects which led to common policy among the Unions, and it did excellent work as a medium of approach to unfriendly employers who were influenced to listen to workmen's claims when the voice of appeal represented a great combination of kindred societies instead of a voice which spoke only for one small body.

The authority and the moral influence of a Federation brought to the members of the Unions financial advantages far in excess of the contribution which the separate Unions paid. The Unions learned a great deal from each other, and regular contacts tended to teach the less efficient Unions the way to manage their business according to the practice and pattern of the best.

The spirit of amalgamation, however, gradually meant the merging of these Unions into one or the other, and in time the Federation disappeared only because there was no longer any need for it.

Women workers are generally unresponsive to Trade Union appeals, though individual women workers have often revealed ~~a~~are enthusiasm and have become effective

Trade Union agents. At the lowest ebb, the Unions which have catered for a mixed membership have always found some women among their members.

The total number has varied according to industrial conditions, and frequently because of wage agitations or changes tending to arouse special interest. Many women naturally look upon their employment in factory and workshop, as a temporary stage in their life. It may be temporary for the individual, but it is permanent for the class. Women who do not join a Trade Union tend not only to keep down their own level, but tend also to lower the level for men workers, and also lower the level of their own sisters or the womenfolk in their homes. Women who think that they profit in saving a Union contribution, gain thereby far less than they lose by having helped to depress the household standards of life by which they suffer. With the varied opportunities now open for women to earn wages they ought to take a greater share in the duty of securing stronger organisation to raise the standard for all.

Apart from the high level which they reached during the period of the Great War, women membership of Trade Unions remains very unsatisfactory. My own Union has less than 50,000 women members out of a membership which is reaching a total of half a million.

We may estimate the total of organised women workers following general occupations at about 150,000. That number is apart from the large groups of skilled women workers in the textile trades, clerical services, and in distributive occupations.

Few people are aware of the range and variety of membership in a General Workers' Union. Hundreds of different occupations and groups of workers are covered in one society, but the Unions contrive to give effective and separate attention to each group, and sometimes even to an individual member.

The very large groups are known and readily recognised. They cover the big divisions of labour as Engineering, Building, Quarrying, Transport and Municipal services.

But General Workers' Unions cover also hundreds of jobs whose names are little known, and give rise to some amusement when we hear them. Their interests are not placed in any second category. Their rights are equal to those of their fellow members.

No two Unions are alike in their method of management, but all of them have discovered some plan for specialising in the service which they render. The old-fashioned and sometimes crude endeavour of these Trade Unions as they worked, say, thirty or forty years ago has given way to plans which usually work as effectively as a good State Department.

Vast amalgamations of employers have been developed in recent years. In cases where some capitalists formerly employed men in hundreds, they now employ them in tens of thousands. Their joint capital has risen in particular cases to scores of millions. This growth of dimensions and financial power requires a corresponding advance in the power of organised labour with ceaseless vigilance and readiness to cope successfully with any development of employers' authority. If unity is strength, the maximum of strength can be enjoyed by uniting the Unions.

The first result of great value from Trade Union amalgamations is in the wider opportunities afforded for more perfect organisation and for solidifying working-class forces. There is also the great advantage which accrues from being able to deal with employers upon firmer ground and to settle questions of policy without the drawback of conflicting decisions reached by separate societies too often holding different opinions upon the one question.

The occupational pride of certain groups of workmen has often been an obstacle to amalgamation, but changes in methods of work as well as the merging of great capitalist interests have hastened amalgamation in recent cases. We have never wished workmen to destroy their trade identity, but identity should never cause workmen to lose a sense of the great interests they have in common.

There are formidable factors in delaying or preventing amalgamation in very many cases. There are the restrictions of the law, and the Registrar's elaborate requirements. There is the strength of custom which disinclines men to change whatever Trade Union method has been established, and there is their dislike of alterations in contributions and benefits.

Changes in methods of production and new-found uses of different materials, such as concrete in place of brick and stone, and a revolution in road-making, have altered for the better relations between Trade Unions. The Unions are now more alike in their membership, and they have in many instances arranged agreements to respect each other's sphere of activity. The result has been greater efficiency, economies, and gains mutually enjoyed.

Such changes have so far left untouched quite a number of the older though smaller Trade Unions catering for groups of workers who possess uncommon skill and who wish to emphasise their technical possessions. Unions with only a small membership attached to the Trades Union Congress are:—

Bedstead Workers' Association.

Chain Makers and Strikers' Association.

Edge Tool Trade Society.

Nut and Bolt Makers' Association.

National Union of Sign, Glass and Ticket Writers.

Waterproof Garment Workers.

Trade Union history within the last fifty years, in relation to Labourers and General Workers, has covered a period of emergence from complete subjection to the power of employers to a high level of freedom for dealing with workshop conditions. Formerly men were helpless and afraid. They have now at least secured a foothold and asserted a right to be equal with employers in the discussion of questions concerning work and wages and general matters arising from their employment.

In these changes General Workers and Labourers are not second to any in the place which they have secured. Indeed, they are often the leaders in asserting the wage-earners' claims. They have great reserves of money, and a membership seldom disinclined to fight and use the strike weapon if other resources fail. They are, however, never advised to use the strike weapon first, and are taught that its main value is less in the ready use of it than in the influence which it exerts on employers because it is there to be used if peaceful methods fail.

Several General Workers' Unions have for long catered for the employees of Public Authorities. The General and Municipal Workers' Union has about one-third of its total membership engaged in gas, electricity, water works, and transport services of various kinds. Employees of Local Authorities and of a large number of great private firms have been able often by Union negotiations to settle matters of great importance besides wage questions.

They have secured for the workmen schemes of super-annuation payments, pensions, and holiday conditions. The Unions have never been short of new problems to settle, and as soon as one question is set aside, another appears. Many of these questions escape public notice, though they have high human values. Accidents have always been a concern of the Unions, and a total sum of a few million pounds in compensation goes into the homes of General Workers' families every year. Factory and workshop inspection is a line of Trade Union activity and many diseases of occupation have been scheduled for compensation because Trade Unions have pressed the view that a disease which on evidence has clearly been contracted through a workman's occupation is a disability equivalent to an accident.

Trade Unions, like great business establishments or factories, have changed their methods. They have often been compelled to change because of the great addition to the number and variety of the duties thrown upon them. Industrial legislation, workmen's compensation,

health benefits, and an extension in the number and value of Trade Union benefits proper, have enormously increased Trade Union service.

New and special forms of administration have had to be instituted. The treatment of grievances and recurring consultations with experts on the employers' side have required the training of experts on the Trade Union side.

A large membership in a great Trade Union means that members are not only employed in scores of different workshops and towns, but in scores of different jobs. To cover these occupations departments have been instituted within the Trade Unions. Trade Union officials have been put at the head of those departments and have been required specially to study the conditions and cases of definite groups of workmen.

Experience makes the expert, and the case is rare now where a Trade Union representative is in any sense inferior to the expert on the employers' side in the discussion of workmen's grievances.

Indeed, it may be said that there are many cases where the Trade Union expert displays a wider range of knowledge of the business under discussion than many an employer of labour, or the head of a State Department who may be responsible for conditions in Government services.

In associations of both employers and employed there has developed in recent years a new method generally unrevealed for dealing with wage claims and disputes. This method is expressed through the Joint Industrial Councils. These Councils are very little in the public eye.

Millions of workers are, however, affected by their activities. They exist as permanent bodies covering hundreds of different occupations. They have to hold regular meetings, and thereby anticipate and allay much of the feeling which was engendered when joint meetings had to be arranged after friction had begun, or following some tendency to conflict in cases where claims had been presented and discussions upon them delayed.

Labourers' Unions take an active part in the working of these Joint Industrial Councils. They were once viewed with suspicion but they are now accepted as very helpful bodies, and are paid for because of the good results accruing from their operations.

Joint Industrial Councils afford high and valuable service apart from the work done by the Trade Boards. The Councils are both National and Regional. Joint Industrial Councils, whether National or Regional, usually consist in equal numbers of representatives chosen by the Trade Unions and the Employers' Associations. Decisions are not reached by a majority vote at any meeting unless representatives attend in equal numbers. In 9 out of 10 cases decisions are reached not by voting, but by agreement. The Councils cover great groups of industries and occupations like the following:—

Cement Industry.

Chemical Trade.

Clay Industry.

Dock Labour.

Flour Industry.

Gas Industry.

Lead Industry.

Match Industry.

Paper-making Industry.

Quarrying Industry.

Road Passenger Transport Industry.

This machinery for the settlement of working conditions and wages is not limited to the members of the Unions. If it could be so limited, the Union membership would very likely be doubled. For it is true that these Councils and Boards operated on the workers' side by Trade Union officials and members cover about double the number of wage-earners compared with the number of Union members.

The National Union of General and Municipal Workers pays about £10,000 a year as fees and expenses for the service of its representatives acting upon these bodies all over the country. That sum of money probably saves to the Union several times the total expended, and it certainly saves to the Union's members large sums of money which probably they would have lost because of stoppages in disputes did these Industrial Councils not exist.

I do not touch on questions of leadership or the work of the outstanding personalities who have inspired and guided the organisation of General Workers during the period of nearly half a century. Even their qualities would not have gone far but for the fine service of the rank and file and local branch officers whose names even are unknown. Their work has been the most effective lever in raising the standard of their fellows. No one can estimate the millions of money added to General Workers' wages as the yield of this common labour. In addition to this, we must remember the results in lighter work; better conditions of toil; greater ease of mind concerning the authority of Employers and a larger sense of both independence and security in the daily task of earning a living.

THE STRUGGLE FOR ORGANISATION AMONG SHOP WORKERS

by

MAURICE HANN

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Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks.

THE DECISION TO form a National Union of Shop Assistants was taken at a special Conference, convened in 1891, by a Joint Committee of the East London Shop Assistants' Union and the Warehouse Assistants' Union.

A number of local Unions and Associations were already in existence but it was felt that "numerous and repeated failures by other methods have forced us to adopt the principles which are embodied in Trade Unionism". Thus "we know we cannot hope to succeed unless we all unite in one National Union". The local Unions and Associations became branches of the Union, but "with one exception they had to reorganise themselves from the nominal subscription, philanthropic, 'Early Closing Associations' state of existence to that of the self-supporting, self-governing state as embodied in the National Union".

At first membership was confined to those employed in the retail trade, but at the second Conference it was thrown open to all persons employed in the distributive trades. The words 'Warehousemen and Clerks' were then added to the title. In 1898, when amalgamation with the United Shop Assistants' Union was effected, the Union took its present name.

An examination of the rules compiled in 1891 gives some indication of the reasons for forming the National

Union. The Preface contains the following: "Shut out as we are at present from every opportunity of participating in social enjoyment with the rest of the community, debarred by the excessive hours which we are compelled to work from gaining any mental or physical recreation, we have become the victims of ruthless competition which in its headlong run for supremacy has utterly ignored us". Hence the first objects of the Union were "to promote the early closing of all shops" and "to secure for the retail trades a universal weekly half-holiday".

The National Union embarked on a great campaign to secure these two much needed reforms, by direct action and through parliamentary channels. The branches in all parts of the country exceeded previous efforts in a great endeavour to secure a uniform early closing and a weekly half-holiday and the militant and determined action of the members brought a fair measure of success.

A few members of the Cardiff branch—a stronghold of the Union—decided that there was a need for some publication which would put the case of the organised shop workers and which would "induce shop assistants to think for themselves; to cultivate those elements which go to mould the freeman; the intelligent citizen; and the honest toiler". Thus they published in July 1896 the first issue of *The Shop Assistant*. A few years later the journal became the official organ of the Union and has been of inestimable value.

The Union drafted a Shops Bill, and this was introduced into the House of Commons towards the end of 1896, by Sir Charles Dilke, who continued to act on behalf of the Union in Parliament until the advent of the Parliamentary Labour Party in 1906. The Bill was unsparingly denounced by the employers and their Associations as being "intolerable, unreasonable and unworkable". The support of the Trades Union Congress and Trades Councils was secured, and mass meetings and demonstrations held in support of the Bill. As might be expected, however, the forces of reaction prevented the Bill becoming an Act.

In June 1899 a number of young clerks employed in a textile warehouse in the City of London petitioned their employer "respectfully asking that the hour until which we work in future be limited to eight and nine o'clock". The employer, however, dismissed two of the ringleaders, whereupon their colleagues demanded their reinstatement, and as this was not forthcoming came out on strike. Although they were not members, the Union decided to accord them full support. This dispute aroused the intense interest of the London movement, and was a complete success, the dismissed employees being reinstated, and the hours of work considerably lessened. It clearly indicated that by direct action the workers could obtain the reforms which Parliament refused to give.

A further grievance was the custom of fining shop workers for many so-called breaches of conduct. The Union made representations to the Home Secretary and conducted a vigorous campaign with the result that shop assistants were included within the scope of the Truck Act, 1897.

The Union, since its formation, had taken serious exception to the radius agreements which so many distributive workers were compelled to sign. During 1906 a tremendous campaign was launched which served to focus the attention of the whole country upon the hardship they entailed. While the Union unhesitatingly challenged individual employers in the courts, it was the fierce glare of publicity from these campaigns which, more than anything else, brought about the wholesale withdrawal of these covenants.

There is no doubt that the fierce opposition aroused by the Union had taught employers in the distributive trades that oppressive restrictions embodied in radius clauses could no longer be enforced against their employees with impunity. The Union had achieved a name which demanded and received respect.

In 1907-8 a very earnest attack upon the living-in system was made. The first decisive step was taken at

Neath, where after all attempts to settle the dispute had failed, the members came out on strike. This strike aroused the country and in several districts the unrest crystallised into a definite demand to live-out. In a number of cases the Union officials negotiated settlements to live-out on satisfactory terms. The Kentish Town strike of June 1907 brought the Union into direct conflict with the London Drapers' Chamber of Trade who gave their support to the firm concerned. Public opinion however was on the side of the workers and although after four months' bitter struggle, involving large sacrifices, the terms of the settlement gave the strikers very little personal satisfaction, these loyal and much tried members had the consciousness of knowing, together with the pioneers at Neath, they had shaken the foundations of the system.

This campaign induced the Government to extend the scope of the Truck Enquiry Committee to include the question of living-in. The Committee reported in 1908. The Minority Report recommended the total abolition of the system but the Majority Report considered that it might still be workable if measures were taken to safeguard the workers' interests.

During all these years, the Union was constantly pressing for legislative limitation of hours of work, weekly half-holiday and restriction of the hours of closing of shops. This agitation produced the Shops Act, 1912, which however was far from meeting the requirements of shop workers.

As a direct result of persistent agitation conducted by the Union, shop workers were included in the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1906. This has been of immense value.

Some tribute must be paid to the splendid manner in which the Trades Union Congress and Trades Councils assisted the Union in these and other campaigns.

The Union has always played an active part in the wider Trade Union and labour movement. The Birmingham Conference of 1891 included among the objects of the Union the representation of each branch on the local

Trades Council and the representation of the National Union at the T.U.C. It was realised that close association with the organised workers of the country had to be maintained in order to secure their support in pressing forward the many reforms of shop life. This support has been loyally rendered; and in return the Union has always been eager to shoulder its obligations to other Unions. Even in its infancy it sought to give financial and other support to such organisations as needed it. The Union was first represented at the Newcastle Trades Union Congress of 1891, and delegates have taken an active part at every Congress since 1894.

The Annual Delegate Meeting of 1905 decided that it should be an Object of the Union "to secure fair payment for services rendered". This was the first occasion that anything of this nature had appeared among the Objects.

At the A.D.M. of 1908 it was decided to set up a Minimum Wage Committee. The basis of the shop workers' minimum wage question was thoroughly investigated during the next two years and a policy formulated. The year 1910 was devoted to setting up local machinery. From 1910 minimum wage campaigns in all parts of the country secured for many thousands of workers considerable advances in wages.

The year 1912 witnessed great accessions to the membership. The fact that the Union decided to become an Approved Society was of course a great contributory factor but, as was subsequently found, the new recruits had a full recognition of the historic mission of Trade Unionism and eagerly supported the Union in its fight for higher wages. The number of disputes during this period "goes to show that those who have come into our organisation, as a result of the Insurance Act, are ready to take up the struggle for improving conditions of employment".

The outbreak of the war in 1914 slowed up these great minimum wage campaigns. The war also saw the end of the International Federation of Employees. The Union had been very active in building up this Federation and

for a number of years had acted as convenor for the English-speaking countries. When the war ended this Federation was not reformed. Instead, a new Organisation, the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees was established. To this body the Union eventually became affiliated.

Towards the end of the war, a further advance for higher wages was made. This movement, backed by a rapidly increasing membership, won some wonderful victories, two of which are particularly deserving of mention. The Management Committee of a large London Store declined to submit the Union's application to the Industrial Court of Arbitration, with the result that some 4,000 employees came out on strike. The strike was completely successful. Arising out of this Movement, an agreement was obtained with the London Employers' Association, the member firms of which employed some 30,000 workers. An agreement has been maintained with this Association ever since.

In the City of London, organisation inside the wholesale textile warehouses went on apace, and an agreement was concluded with the Wholesale Textile Association. This agreement also covered some 30,000 workers and was maintained until 1929.

When the post-war boom collapsed, the Union fought hard to maintain its agreements, with some considerable success. In other cases, the wage cuts proposed by the employers were greatly reduced. However, for some considerable time the Union remained on the defensive.

In 1917 the Union was represented on a deputation from the T.U.C. which urged the Minister of Labour to promote a Bill which would give him greater powers to deal with occupations where low wages and bad conditions of employment existed. It was particularly stressed that the Trade Boards Act should operate in the distributive trades.

In 1918 an amendment to the Trade Boards Act gave power to the Minister of Labour to include the distributive trades.

A Grocery and Provisions Trade Board was established which, unfortunately, proved bitterly disappointing. The employers used every subterfuge to postpone the fixing of a legal minimum rate. The manoeuvres of the employers and the Minister caused bitter resentment on the part of the Union, for in fact the Grocery Trade Board did not function from November 1921. From that time forward, the Union has consistently urged the necessity of Trade Boards for the distributive trades.

The Union also continued its campaign for a 48-hour week, with the result that in 1930 the Labour Government placed the matter before a Select Committee which reported in favour of a 48-hour week. Unfortunately this recommendation has not been adopted, although the 48-hour week for young persons employed in distribution has since been conceded by the Shops Act, 1934.

During this period the Union also paid attention to the evils arising from cut-price trading, works club trading and from the operation of the gift coupon schemes. Living-in and radius agreements have been combated when the need arose. During the winter of 1935-6 members employed in two large wholesale textile warehouses demanded the right to live out. Just when it seemed that there would be a withdrawal of labour, the firms agreed to abolish 'living-in'.

Since 1904 the possibility of securing the amalgamation of the various Unions catering for distributive workers, has been discussed. In 1906 the National Federation of Shop Workers and Clerks was formed to 'secure unity of action' by the member Unions and other kindred Unions. Discussions with the National Association of Grocers' Assistants during 1919 resulted in the transfer of its whole membership to the Union in 1920. The following year the membership of the Dental Assistants' Union was transferred to the Union.

In 1926 a ballot of the Members of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers, the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries and of this Union was taken

on the subject of an amalgamation of the three organisations. The members of all three Unions declared in favour of amalgamation, but the N.U.D.A.W. did not get the requisite majority, and in the case of this Union the necessary quota was not obtained. In 1936, the Annual Conference of the N.U.D.A.W. and this Union instructed the Executive Conference to draw up proposals for amalgamation. These were presented to the 1937 Conference when it was resolved that a ballot be taken. On this occasion the N.U.D.A.W. result complied with the provisions of the Trade Union (Amalgamation) Act; but, as the requisite number of members of this Union failed to vote, the ballot was ineffective.

In 1935 the National Executive Committee decided that certain radical changes should be made in the organising machinery of the Union. The Research Department of the Union had been conducting an extensive survey of wages and labour conditions. This showed conclusively that the distributive workers ranked among the lowest-paid workers in the country; that the hours of work were generally exceptionally long; and that there was a great deal of 'blind alley' employment.

These facts had convinced the Union that a national campaign 'to abolish sweating' should be launched. The old method of organising was not considered likely to prove successful: a direct appeal had to be made to each trade. Hence the National Executive Committee introduced new organising machinery to meet this need.

In the autumn of 1935 a big drive was initiated for the recruitment of workers in the large multiple grocery firms. The vigorous leadership and backing of the officials and membership resulted in recruitment at an almost unprecedented pace. An application for a Trade Union agreement was presented to the largest group of multiple grocers, and a settlement effected in May 1936.

The consequences of this really important settlement were tremendous. Employees of a number of other multiple grocery firms joined the Union in their thousands. By

November 1936 the Union's programme had been presented to twenty-two companies. In a number of cases difficulty was experienced in getting the employers to agree to meet representatives of the Union. Plans were then made for a great Christmas strike to secure recognition by these employers. This determined endeavour convinced the employers that the Union meant business, and so better counsels prevailed and the strike was averted.

The success of the campaign in multiple grocery attracted the attention of workers of other retail trades, and gradually the campaign has been extended to multiple tailoring, footwear and drapery.

The agreement with Messrs. Lewis's Ltd., the departmental stores proprietors, was soon followed by agreements with other stores. The staffs of the two largest multiple tailoring companies were organised and an agreement concluded with the London Employers' Association to cover the employees in provincial branches; the London employees coming within the scope of the other agreement with this association.

The latest and by far the most important development has been an agreement with the United Kingdom Association of Multiple Shop Proprietors (Grocery and Provisions). This covers 80,000 employees of the principal multiple grocery companies.

This campaign has already resulted in wage increases amounting to over £1,500,000 and Trade Union agreements covering over 200,000 employees in the retail distributive trade. The Union membership at the time of writing is 65 per cent greater than it was when the campaign was launched, and the income and General Fund is greater than ever before. Thus it has been made abundantly clear that the workers will respond to a vigorous lead.

The campaign is still in its infancy—many thousands of employees remain the victims of exploitation. Very much remains to be done before it can truly be said that 'sweating has been abolished from the distributive trades'.

The influence of the Union has been much greater than its numerical strength would appear to command. It has been a relatively small Union—a rebel Union—a fighting Union, and it can be expected that increasing membership will not rob the Union of this vitality, but rather enable it to fulfil its historic mission, 'to uplift and protect a class who have long been the victims of the most remorseless tyrant that has ever swayed the will of man—competition'.

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

by

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and Allied Workers.

TRADE UNIONISM BEGAN in the Co-operative movement in small Unions in a few of the larger societies. As early as 1887 there are records of Employees' Associations in Bolton and London. A conference in that gloomy Co-operative Hall in the Central Premises of the Manchester and Salford Equitable Society—where conferences are still being held, though the hall is smartened up—adopted a resolution to form the Manchester and District Co-operative Employees' Association. Their first annual report shows that the wages for the managers of branch shops and head countermen ranged from 18s. to 40s., the latter being considered a remarkably good wage by the Management Committees of the larger societies. Other countermen were paid from 7s. to 25s. Nor was the 7s. a boy's wage. There are records as late as 1901 of men of 26 years of age receiving 13s. a week after 14 years' service. And that 13s. was not increased by any commission on sales.

In June 1895 the Bolton and Manchester Associations joined together and became the Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees, with a total membership of 2,151, and total assets of £98 3s. 2d. Even these slender resources did not hinder the Union from starting an agitation for a minimum wage of 24s. per week for all employees over 21

years of age. There was no need to specify a scale for women. Co-operative employment was then a male field. By 1899 the Union was able to afford a full-time officer in Mr. Alfred Hewitt, for the membership had reached 5,500 and the funds over £3,000. The Union affiliated with the Trades Union Congress and sent its first delegate to Congress that year. There contact was made with a Union that also began life in 1891, the National Union of Shop Assistants. There was no thought of rivalry then. The A.U.C.E. was mainly centred in the North of England and the Midlands. The strength of the Shop Assistants' Union was mainly in Scotland and London. Both grew rather slowly and with little contact, as the Shop Assistants' Union under the inspiration of Sir Charles and Lady Dilke was naturally more interested in conditions in the private retail trade.

With the turn of the century, a vigorous period began in co-operative Trade Unionism. A slender and ardent youth, Joseph Hallsworth, had been appointed to the office, and spent all his spare time in organisation. John Jagger, now M.P. for Clayton, then the furnishing manager at York Co-operative Society, became president of the Yorkshire District. Under the guidance of these two men, respectively General Secretary and General President during the last twenty years, the A.U.C.E. lost its pleasant 'tea-party' character and became a vigorous fighting body.

Whatever wage the co-operative employee got, it was no worse and generally a little better than the private trade. Their treatment, as human beings, was decidedly more decent. At any rate it was a steady job. Nothing, therefore, could persuade the management committees of those days (and till the present day, in many cases) that a co-operative employee was anything but the luckiest man in town. Why did he need a Trade Union when his employers were mostly Trade Unionists themselves? Couldn't they be trusted to treat their workers properly? And why should the Co-operative movement pay any more than the private trade? The employee could get the benefit of the Co-operative movement by joining his society like any one else. Because

of this creed, firmly held and obstinately enforced, the early disputes of the infant Union were mostly to get recognition. It was nearly as difficult when some of the larger societies smiled upon the Union, gave it free facilities of meeting, attended its functions, and with the best will in the world regarded it much as a modern up-to-date employer regards his factory sports club—with similar lamentable effects on its fighting qualities.

A turning point came in 1905 when that sturdy and influential co-operator, William Maxwell, a director of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society, was President of the National Co-operative Congress at Paisley. He made in his presidential address a violent attack on the Co-operative movement for its lack of a humane wage policy.

Maxwell quoted figures of wage rates so low that the conscience of the movement was roused. The powerful influence of Margaret Llewellyn Davies, the honorary General Secretary of the Women's Co-operative Guild, was thrown on the side of the Union's minimum-wage campaign. At the Newcastle-on-Tyne Congress of the Co-operative movement in 1909, a resolution was passed urging all societies to adopt the scale, which provided a uniform progressive rate from 6s. per week at 14 to 24s. at 21 for males, and from 5s. at 14 to 17s. at 20 for females. Low as these rates seem now, they were higher than anything being paid in the distributive trade at that time, particularly for juveniles and women. At first, even the wealthy C.W.S. refused to pay the scale for anyone but a limited number of 'distributive' employees. It needed the pressure of the delegates at quarterly meetings to give by resolution instructions to pay this scale to all their workers, and then this was not finally paid until 1914.

The Co-operative Union in 1910 refused a request of the Union to insert a Trade Union wage clause in their model rules for co-operative societies. But the Women's Guild, a powerful organisation of their own shoppers, with its 13,337 signatures for the minimum wage, could not be entirely ignored. The larger societies gave the lead for the

scale, and in some of these the Union secured 30s. for adult workers because of the sharp rise in the cost of living in 1911.

These successes were viewed with misgiving by co-operative committee-men. Trade Unionists themselves, they resented what they considered the privileged position of a Union that seemed to skim the very cream of distributive workers, 'bleed' the workers' movement for them, and leave the frightfully low wages in the private trade untouched. If the friendship of committee-men could have determined it, the Shop Assistants' Union, with its record of hard work for the private trade, would have been the Union for co-operative shop workers. But in practice there was then, and unfortunately still remains, nearly as much antagonism between the private trade distributive worker and the co-operative employee as between their respective employers. The A.U.C.E. flourished because it fulfilled so exactly the desires of the co-operative workers for a show of their very own, dealing with a movement they so thoroughly understood.

Among their employers, however, were the influential men in the Trades Union Congress, which in 1912 accepted the finding of the Disputes Committee of the T.U.C. that where there was a Union catering for an industry, the A.U.C.E. must hand over its members to that Union. This meant an end of the 'industrial unionisation' of the co-operative workers, and their splitting into about forty-seven craft Unions, with the Shop Assistants' Union taking the distributive workers.

Talk of industrial Unionism and Guild Socialism was much in the air, so that when the A.U.C.E. left the T.U.C. rather than submit, they carried a good deal of sympathy with them, notably from the miners and the railwaymen. This was useful. The T.U.C. had probably little hope that the vigorous and ably led Co-operative Employees' Union would accept its dismemberment tamely, but undoubtedly the Disputes Committee had handed a powerful weapon to the co-operative committees in their fight against

Union recognition. It cost the A.U.C.E. and the co-operative movement many thousands of pounds in recognition fights, before the issue was finally settled by the return of the A.U.C.E. to the Congress in 1921, through amalgamation with another Union.

During the war, the co-operative movement played an important national part as one of the great food distributing organisations. The role of the co-operative employee was also recognised as being of national importance. Thousands of them joined up, and their places were taken by women. For the first time, girls appeared behind the grocery counters, and manipulated the bacon-cutting machines—holy preserves of the male worker. Right from the first, at its Easter delegate meeting in 1915, the A.U.C.E. demanded that this substituted female labour should be paid at the male rates. To set an example, it abolished any distinction between the wages of males and females on its own staff—an equality that has been continued ever since. After some hesitation the Shop Assistants' Union adopted a three-fourths basis for the new women workers.

The fights of the A.U.C.E. for equal rates for substitute female labour were mainly sharp but short. It was difficult for the co-operative societies to stand against the public opinion of their own patriotic membership. Later the strikes were extended to cover war bonuses for males and females alike. On at least one occasion, during a strike of the C.W.S. in 1918, the A.U.C.E. received the honour of being 'proclaimed' by the King in Council—which did not seem to do it much harm.

The close of the war saw the co-operative employees in the main organised in the A.U.C.E., though the N.A.U.S.A. had a considerable number of members in co-operative employment in London and parts of Scotland. A movement for the amalgamation of the two Unions, started in 1916, had broken down on the question of scope. The N.A.U.S.A. wanted to keep their Union to distributive and allied clerical workers. The A.U.C.E. were unwilling to lose the large active and well co-ordinated

membership in the great C.W.S. producing factories. The division between private and co-operative trade was still active, and a certain bitterness had been engendered in the ranks of the A.U.C.E. by the not altogether unnatural willingness of Mr. John Turner, the influential General Secretary of the N.A.U.S.A., to side with his colleagues, the craft Unions, on the T.U.C. General Council in their demarcation fights with the A.U.C.E.

Wages scales in the co-operative movement at the end of the war showed advances on anything that had been known previously. The early agreements had provided for no limitation of hours, and no payment for the overtime which was one of the curses of the pre-war distributive trade. During the war, due to need for economy in lighting, the Early Closing orders made it easier for the Union to establish the 48-hour week, at any rate in the shops. But even so, no agreement was secured which provided wages in sickness or payment for holidays. Under the Common Law, a salaried employee has a right to wages during sickness, which is not enjoyed by the manual worker; but as his employer has an equal right to sack him if he claims them, that does not amount to much. In 1919 the A.U.C.E. concluded its first agreement providing for three weeks full and three weeks half pay during sickness, and other agreements rapidly followed, concluded over wide areas.

The pressure of the Unions for the improvement of conditions as well as wages has resulted in the universal payment for a period of wages during sickness for distributive and clerical labour. A maximum of forty-eight hours a week is enjoyed by all productive workers as well as distributive, with payment for overtime. The Northern District Hours and Wages Board (Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland and Westmoreland) has an agreement for a 44-hour week, granted by the miners on the co-operative committee when they won the 7-hour day. A 40-hour week for clerical workers is general, as are annual holidays with pay for the distributive and clerical staffs.

In the period that followed the war, the co-operative movement was not immune from labour disputes. In 1919, in South Yorkshire, perhaps its best organised district, the A.U.C.E. fought its hardest fight for the merging of war bonus with wages into a complete wage scale. The societies recognised that this was a national issue, and that if South Yorkshire societies capitulated, the areas would be taken piecemeal. There was a threatened lock-out of 30,000 in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Staffs, and Notts. Strike pay on this vast scale would have bankrupted a Union that had fought hard and gallantly all through the war to maintain and improve wage standards. Fortunately common sense prevailed, and an agreement was reached that went up to 68s. a week for adult and experienced countermen, and 38s. for women, and the high-water mark of co-operative wages was reached in 1922 at 80s. and 44s. respectively.

Such big labour disputes cause more attention to be paid to methods of conciliation. During the war a conciliation committee set up between the Co-operative Union and the A.U.C.E. had prevented a good many strikes. But because this committee had been responsible for the granting of war bonuses, and the consolidation of war wages, naturally it was not looked upon with favour by the co-operative movement when the deflation period started, and wages were to be brought down. The Union's reaffiliation to the T.U.C. as the result of an amalgamation when the Union became the N.U.D.A.W. in 1921 brought it under the Joint Committee of Trade Unionists and Co-operators. The Trade Unionist members were themselves, or through their Unions, suffering heavy reductions in private industry. They saw no reason why the co-operative employees should fare any better. Swingeing reductions were given, particularly as regards women's wages. This Committee was killed by resolution at the 1925 Trades Union Congress, largely as a result of a smashing attack on its findings by Mr. Joseph Hallsworth. As the other Unions in co-operative industry had suffered as well

as the A.U.C.E., the larger Union in co-operative service got their support.

In 1927 there was set up the Conciliation Machinery which is still in operation. The National Board is chosen from two panels. On the employers' side there is a panel of forty-eight, being four persons from each of the twelve districts of the Co-operative Union. On the workers' side there are four from each of the twenty-two Unions in co-operative service—the smallest with a few members supplying the same number of names to the panel as the Union controlling more members in co-operative service than the other twenty-one put together. But this works out quite fairly, as for each conciliation case the Union or Unions concerned supply four out of the six for the workers' side, and the other two members are drawn from Unions not concerned in the dispute. An impartial chairman chosen from a panel by agreement presides, and there are two joint secretaries without votes.

As a piece of machinery the constitution is admirable, but there is a fatal flaw in practice. To the old Joint Committee of Trade Unionists and Co-operators, reference was not compulsory, but once a dispute had been referred to it, a decision had to be reached—if not by agreement of the two sides, then by a decision of the chairman. To the present board, reference is compulsory, but settlement is not. The chairman can only give his decision if both sides agree to leave it to him. A habit has grown up that whichever side does not want any alteration simply refuses to agree to the chairman having the right to decide. Thus cases drag on for months. There cannot be a strike because reference is compulsory, and there cannot be a decision because settlement is not. A good deal of unrest exists at the present time in Union circles which want their demands for increases to meet the rise in the cost of living dealt with quickly.

Although the C.W.S. took part in setting up this machinery, they have always refused to operate it. It was not till the end of 1937 that the Unions concerned

were able to reach agreement with the 'Wholesale' upon a special conciliation board for their internal disputes.

Amalgamation of Unions in the co-operative service, especially such obviously cognate ones as the A.U.C.E., the N.A.U.S.A., and the National Union of Clerks, has always had strong support. In 1921, it came near to being completed with the addition of the Journeyman Butchers' Federation. All that finally emerged was a union between the A.U.C.E. and the National Union of Warehouse Workers, whose General Secretary was Alderman W. A. Robinson, now M.P. for St. Helens. This amalgamation, as has been said, solved the problem of the A.U.C.E. returning to the Trades Union Congress on the same terms as it left it—freedom to organise all co-operative employees into its ranks under the new title of the National Union of Distributive and Allied workers (N.U.D.A.W.). In practice and by friendly agreement, demarcation disputes are now largely avoided. The N.U.D.A.W. does not take any craft workers into its ranks, though it retains those previously organised. By a series of agreements mutually arranged, none of the Unions in co-operative service will take members from any of the other Unions, unless they are clear on the books of their previous Union and have obtained its permission to transfer. This permission is frequently granted where a solitary member or very small group get work in a society largely controlled by one of the other Unions. On the distributive side, only the N.U.D.A.W. and the N.A.U.S.A. really count, and the N.U.D.A.W. has well over 80 per cent of the organised distributive workers, and about 60 per cent of the total workers in the Co-operative movement. The days of the disastrous demarcation disputes with the craft Unions are over, and the General Secretary of the N.U.D.A.W., as representative of the non-manual workers, sits amiably with the craft workers' representatives on other groups in the General Council of the T.U.C.

Since 1921, amalgamation with the N.A.U.S.A. and the N.U.D.A.W. has been constantly under consideration. In

1932 a ballot was taken and again in 1937. Unfortunately though both Unions showed large majorities for union, the actual percentages demanded by the Trades Union Act were not reached. It is, however, true to say that relations between the two biggest Unions are far more amicable today than they have ever been. A good deal of this is due to the firmness of the respective executives in insisting that over-zealous officials shall not break the strict rules against member-grabbing.

The period 1915 to 1925 was the stormiest in labour troubles that the Co-operative movement has ever had to face. While, in the larger societies, conditions were greatly improved, the smaller societies gave a good deal of trouble over keeping agreements. But the last ten years has shown much improvement in joint working. In many societies, employees are represented on the Board, not directly but elected by the body of members, having won the right to be eligible as ordinary members for election. In the last Co-operative Congress over 100 delegates out of about 2,000 were employees, though a co-operative employee has never yet been president of this national legislative body of the movement. The N.U.D.A.W. is in affiliation with international organisations, not only as regards its distributive membership, but also for the productive members. It is thus affiliated to the International Factory Workers' Association, as well as the International of Clerical and Non-manual Employees, and the International Transport Workers' Federation. An interesting fact is that this Union has consistently maintained contact with its counterpart in the Soviet Union. The General President, and officially appointed Executive members, have gone by invitation to their sister Union in the U.S.S.R.; and invitations have as regularly been sent to the Russian Union to send delegates to the National Congress of the N.U.D.A.W. Though it has not as yet been possible for the delegates to come, the friendly relations between the Russian co-operative workers and the English have proved of real interest and value to both.

Co-operative employees have shown great interest in the political side of the movement. The N.U.D.A.W. has 89 per cent of its nearly 200,000 members who have contracted in for the political levy. Since 1923 it has had direct representation in Parliament. At present it is represented in Parliament by four men and one woman. The N.A.U.S.A. has one member.

The co-operative employee is frequently denounced for being selfishly concerned only with securing good conditions for himself. Actually he is frequently found in the local Labour Parties and Trades Councils, a leading figure because he is used to dealing with the public and unlikely to be victimised by his employer. In the General Strike of 1926, while giving £10,000 to the miners, the N.U.D.A.W. worked out a scheme of food supply to the strikers in conjunction with the Co-operative movement, based on a similar scheme that had been put forward in 1921 to help in case of a Triple Alliance strike. With alterations to bring it up to date, this scheme provides for a complete workers' food supply in time of general industrial disturbance.

The combination of good wages and conditions, a high degree of remuneration, and consequent security of tenure means that the Co-operative movement gets the pick of the workers in the distributive trade, and it is as much due to this fact, as to the benevolence of the employers that the high degree of unionisation exists.

ORGANISATION AMONG NON-MANUAL
WORKERS

by

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ALTHOUGH THERE WERE one or two organisations catering for non-manual workers in existence before 1914, the general growth of Trade Unionism amongst such workers has been a war and post-war phenomenon. Organisations of teachers, local government officers, railway clerks and general clerks, existed about the beginning of the century, whilst in the immediate pre-war period several small embryo organisations, such as that of the draughtsmen engaged in the shipbuilding and engineering industries, came into existence.

Most of these organisations were considerably affected by the disabilities under which each class felt it laboured. Prices rose and salaries failed to keep pace with them. The awards made to munition workers by way of war bonuses did not touch the bulk of staff workers, even in the munition works, for a time. Great dissatisfaction ensued, which made the propaganda for increased membership of the existing Unions effective, and brought into existence many more.

Some of these war-time and post-war Unions have established themselves with a fair degree of success. Others have withered and perished, mainly because of a failure to realise that anything like a third party attitude was finally untenable. The improvement of conditions, whilst seeking

to work in collaboration with employing elements, however disguised, was a task beyond their powers.

There were many causes for non-manual workers not organising themselves earlier. In the first place, as distinct classes of workers they were scarcely so well established, nor had they reached any stabilisation in the proportion of their numbers to those of the working world. Moreover, the value of the labour of professional and technical workers cannot be so readily assessed as that of manual labour by the amount of time taken. The variation between the labour value of staff workers in an office may be very great. Often the less efficient worker may scarcely expect ever to be able to tackle the higher branches of administration, design or supervision. Moreover such classes of workers were in much closer contact with owner-managers and people in authority. Later, in the increasing adoption of the limited liability principle, people in authority came to be largely regarded as higher paid servants from the ranks of the salaried grades.

The apparent opportunity to rise in the social scale acted as a deterrent to effective Trade Union action. For the most part conditions were probably easier in the offices than in workshops and factories, with a general adoption of staff conditions, paid holidays, at least a certain amount of time off for sickness, better remuneration, etc. The Trade Union movement had become identified in their minds also with wage labour, and though the general conditions covering their remuneration were similar to those covering that of manual workers, from the nature of the work and through contact with people whose conduct was generally classed as professional, the idea of salaried people being available for a general call upon their services and not having their salaries determined by any labour time measurement, had a great influence. It was possible to find among clerical and technical workers a variation in salaries for people classified the same way, where in the upper regions they might have twice the remuneration of the lower paid people.

The degree of organisation, however, even in the best instances, was not very high and in clerical occupations

generally was deplorably low, as indeed it is today. Professional workers are to-day reckoned to be organized generally to about 15 per cent, compared with about 30 per cent in the case of manual workers. Teachers were in a class by themselves, the National Union of Teachers with its 160,000 members being an exceptionally powerful body. It still remains outside affiliation with other sections of the Trade Union movement. This is also true of the National Association of Local Government Officers, now over thirty years old, and more than 100,000 strong. In recent times an attempt has been made to ease the tension between that body and others in the Trades Union Congress, by the formation of a joint advisory council for local government service, upon which N.A.L.G.O., with other Unions in this field, is represented.

Inside N.A.L.G.O. indeed is exemplified the exceptionally wide range of salaries mentioned earlier. It enrolls not only clerks and stenographers, but also town clerks, city engineers, etc., who may receive very substantial remuneration. It has naturally avoided extreme industrial action such as strikes, but has done a good deal of its negotiation by putting pressure upon town, county and urban district councils. Both its form of organisation and method of approach have hitherto prevented it from close identification with the rest of the Trade Union movement. In Trade Union circles it is hoped that the recent arrangement may bring it into much closer contact with the rest of the Trade Union world.

Probably the strongest single Union of clerical workers in this country today is the Railway Clerks' Association, also a pre-war Union, with something over 60,000 members and a high degree of organisation. It was not until after the war that it was recognised by the railway companies. Since then it has taken a very active part in all railway negotiations, along with the two other railway Unions, and has increased the remuneration and improved the conditions of clerical workers on the railways to a very great extent. It has been extremely active, of course, in the Trades Union Congress and in the Labour Party for a number of years.

Amongst other specialised forms of clerks who have been organised into Unions, are those employed in insurance offices and in banks. The Guild of Insurance Officials, like the Bank Officers' Guild, each numbering about 20,000 members, are purely post-war organisations. At the moment they are engaged in incessant endeavour to gain recognition from their employers, who stress the alleged confidential nature of the work as a reason for not giving the Unions facilities for negotiation. Till recently both bodies have kept out of affiliation with either the National Federation of Professional Workers or the Trades Union Congress. In 1937, however, the Guild of Insurance Officials affiliated to the T.U.C.

Many of the banks, like insurance companies, are large organisations where considerable aggregations of men and women take place, although the number of men employed is being affected by mechanisation in book-keeping. Probably organisation and certainly recognition have been hindered to a great extent because neither body had gone out for a full-blooded form of Trade Union organisation. Recent incidents and the failure of the banks and the insurance companies to treat with the Unions, are driving them to closer fellowship with other Trade Unions.

The greatest difficulty of organisation, however, exists amongst the general body of clerks, of whom there are reckoned to be no less than from 1,250,000 to 1,500,000. The National Union of Clerks, which has been in existence for about forty years grew from about 12,000 members in 1914 to about 32,000 in 1918, and in 1920 was reckoned to number close on 48,000. It had a serious decline after that to about 6,000 or 7,000, and at present its membership is returned at about 12,000. These figures give a measure of the difficulties of getting at the great mass of commercial clerks, many of them employed in very small businesses and far from conscious of the necessity of industrial action. Even the huge clerical staffs of the heavy engineering industries seems as difficult to convince of the necessity of Trade Union action as their more isolated fellows.

This, of course, is not the whole picture. Apart from the

N.U.C. and a more recent growth like the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries, with a very small membership, many of the general Unions such as General and Municipal Workers, Transport Workers and Operative Printers and Assistants, enrol clerks in particular industries, as is done in the railway, the banking and the insurance world by the organisations already named. There are also in addition to those clerical workers in the National Association of Local Government Officers and the National Union of Public Employees, a vast number in Civil Service Unions, the Civil Service Confederation being generally estimated at numbering round about 100,000 with a large number also in the Union of Post Office Workers. Powerful distributive organisations also, such as the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers and the Union of Shop Assistants, have important clerical sections. The organisation of clerks has been visualised at times as possible only on something like an industrial basis. The position has again come under review in this way, and is now under consideration with a view to a more extensive recruiting drive.

It is reckoned that the purely clerical Unions affiliated to the T.U.C. with those having clerical sections, total about 150,000 with possibly about 300,000 not yet affiliated or debarred from affiliation, among the latter being those in the Civil Service and amongst postal workers.

The most recent estimate of the total number of non-manual workers puts them at 20 to 25 per cent of the working population, roughly from two and a half to three millions. Almost all these organisations, with the exception of the insurance clerks and the bank clerks, are recognised by many employers and employers' Federations. In addition there are considerable sections, although on a much smaller scale, of technical, supervisory and other professional grades. Amongst them may be mentioned the National Union of Journalists, who were affiliated to the T.U.C. for a short time. The Union has had considerable success in improving the salaries and status of journalists. The Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen,

covers about 75 per cent of the technicians in those industries, with quite a strong Trade Union policy. That organisation started in 1913, but its growth was largely a war and post-war one. It has been fully recognised by the Engineering and Allied Employers' National Federation for over fourteen years. With considerable industrial success it has covered new Trade Union ground in extensive scientific and technical publication, in offering the services of an appointments bureau to its members, in its intensive statistical enquiries, and in its special care for apprentices and young workers.

Other organisations in this category include the Electrical Power Engineers' Association, the Association of Supervising Electricians and the Association of Architects' and Surveyors' Assistants, the latter still rather poorly organised but capable of considerable expansion. These latter bodies, like clerks and draughtsmen, are in the National Federation of Professional Workers, but unlike them are not affiliated to the T.U.C. The E.P.E.A. has a degree of organisation close on 90 per cent.

In the years immediately after the war, when there was considerable ferment in the field of non-manual work, it was felt that the Trades Union Congress was giving too little attention to this problem. The result was the formation of the National Federation of Professional Workers. Part of the reason for creating this Federation was in order to bring some of the Unions, not affiliated to the T.U.C., into closer contact with it and also to combat the very serious movement directed to creating a 'third party' in industry—the staff workers, who would be more allied to employers than to the general body of non-manual workers. Indeed the main difficulty in the way of organisation has always been the more or less successful endeavour of employers to keep non-manual workers from close contact with the manual workers. This policy is gradually being circumvented by the pressure of events and by the greater interest the Trade Union movement in general is taking in the problems of non-manual workers, as is evidenced by the creation some years ago of a joint advisory council

between the T.U.C. and the National Federation of Professional Workers. Later this body was dissolved and an advisory council for non-manual workers of the T.U.C. was created, the Federation having representation upon it.

Of the Federation's membership of 150,000, the bulk are also affiliated to the T.U.C., e.g. the Railway Clerks' Association, the Association of Engineering and Ship-building Draughtsmen, the National Union of Clerks, the Women Clerks and Secretaries, and the clerical sections of the General and Municipal Workers, of the Transport Workers, of the N.U.R., and of the Shop Assistants. Typical of the Unions not affiliated to the T.U.C. but in the Federation, are the National Union of Journalists, the Electrical Power Engineers' Association and the Supervising Electricians.

The problems studied by the Federation and by the Non-Manual Workers' Advisory Council of the T.U.C. include such questions as raising the salary limit for unemployment and health insurance, better provision in workmen's compensation acts, bills to improve conditions in offices, to compensate for loss of employment or office, to rectify the abuses of patent law, to bring such workers within the scope of the Fair Wages Clause, etc.

◦ The Unions which have organised themselves on Trade Union lines have for the most part proved most successful in acquiring members. One or two of those which have refused to take the ordinary forms of industrial action and apparently identified themselves to some extent with organisations which included employers, are little, if any better organised than they were in the early 'twenties. Some of the mushroom growths have disappeared entirely.

Constant endeavours have been made to secure affiliation of non-manual and professional Unions of all grades in some cases with success, as for instance in the affiliation of Societies like the Medical Practitioners' and Navigating Officers' Unions. Some have remained outside through indifference, others for financial reasons and others because they have felt no need. The stronger unaffiliated Unions retain friendly relationships with the Federation and often attend confer-

ences on special questions. In some cases, as in that of the National Association of Local Government Officers, there is probably a fear that if they entered into affiliation with the T.U.C., a considerable number of the members in the higher salary ranges and who are virtually managers, would be lost, but this argument does not apply in the case of the N.F.P.W.

There is a growing feeling amongst all classes of non-manual workers towards grafting something of a professional spirit into their attitude. A sign of this is the endeavour to differentiate between salaries and wages. There may be a certain snobbishness in the attitude, but undoubtedly most of them believe that remuneration is for a service more or less to the community, which cannot be measured by the ordinary payment for hourly or daily labour. Almost universally they enjoy staff conditions, including payment for holidays of greater or less extent, etc. The journalists have a professional code of conduct which applies both nationally and internationally. This professional spirit is undoubtedly growing and will grow as industry becomes more generally socialised.

A further interesting development is the degree to which many of the Unions link up internationally, as in the case of the N.U.J. and the International Federation of Journalists, and of a number of societies with the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees. The N.F.P.W. is linked up with the International Confederation of Professional Workers, which comprises national federations not wholly composed of employed persons, but including medical men, artists, etc. There is growing up a feeling that many self-employed persons who are at present sympathetic to Trade Union ideals must be linked up with the Trade Union movement. Interesting developments on these lines may be a feature in the near future. The Trades Union Congress has realised this by the formation of its joint committee with the British Medical Association and its proposed Scientific Advisory Committee.

Like some of the manual Unions, certain of the

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professional organisations have sought to take a part in the training of apprentices and young persons, and to negotiate on their behalf. The conditions under which in future the engineering Unions will negotiate for apprentices and young persons will certainly apply to such a body as the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen; to which the Engineering Employers' Federation has recently conceded the right of negotiating on behalf of apprentices and young persons. This may ultimately lead to a new attitude towards professional training and responsibility.

All the professional Unions are extremely interested in the problem of freedom of association, and in helping people like bank and insurance clerks to secure the elementary rights of negotiation so far denied them. Teachers are concerned with this question and with freedom of expression in their professional capacity no less than journalists. Codes, explicit or implicit, of professional conduct, the safeguarding of general and functional freedom, must bring all professional Unions together ultimately.

Possibly the limit of development has not yet been reached regarding the proportion of professional workers to the general workers. In Germany it is estimated they are about 27 per cent of the whole, down to a very much lower figure in the countries possessing a predominatingly rural economy. These numbers must have some effect on the future development of Trade Unionism in the chief industrial nations. As these proportions increase, it will become more than ever imperative to attach them firmly to the general democratic and trade union organizations. Certain aspects of the German situation some years ago stand as an object lesson.

In the socialised and semi-socialised services of the future, staff workers will necessarily occupy a very important key position. In some instances their relationship to the employing authorities will be analogous to that of Civil Servants, but there is a resolute determination amongst them at present to prevent themselves suffering the disabilities which apply to Civil Servants, either regarding the scope of negotiations or in the matter of political prohibitions.

CIVIL SERVICE TRADE UNIONISM

by

W. J. BROWN

General Secretary, Civil Service Clerical Association.

THE BRITISH CIVIL SERVICE comprises over 300,000 members, divided into literally hundreds of grades—exclusive of the Industrial Staffs, who number another 150,000 or thereabouts.

For our purposes, the Service divides itself into five or six main groups: (1) the Industrial Staffs, which are cut off from the general body of Civil Servants, and are in the main organised in their appropriate Trade Unions; (2) the Post Office Staffs (excluding the Clerical, Administrative and Higher Grades)—whose story is told elsewhere in this volume; (3) the Clerical Grades of all departments; (4) the 'Higher Grades' of all departments; (5) the Technical Grades of all departments; and (6) the Minor and Messengerial Grades of all departments.

Civil Service Trade Unionism, outside the Post Office and the Industrial Grades, remained in a very rudimentary condition—where it existed at all—right up to 1914.

The Technical Staffs were, for practical purposes, unorganised. The Clerical Grades were organised in a bewildering number of small bodies, without full-time officers and with only nominal contributions—sometimes as low as one shilling a year. So with the Executive and Administrative Grades of the Service. Right up to the Great War there was no negotiating machinery between

the Staff Associations, such as they were, and the Departments. There was not even access by way of deputation to the Heads of Departments. There was no direct communication, even by correspondence between the Associations and the Treasury—which in effect determines, by its control of the purse-strings, the conditions of all Civil Servants. Even Memorials to the Treasury had to go through the Head of the Department.

Broadly, the Service, as far as it was organised at all, was organised in a multitude of small and ineffective bodies, highly respectable, careful to dissociate themselves from the general stream of Trade Unionism, and limited to two methods of agitation. The first was by Petition (always obsequiously worded) through Heads of Departments to the Treasury. The second, which occurred about once every twenty years, was by stating a case to a Royal Commission on the Civil Service. Neither method offered any real protection to the great mass of Civil Servants.

The Great War and its aftermath made Civil Service Trade Unionism an effective force. The pace-maker in this development was the Assistant Clerks' Association, now known as the Civil Service Clerical Association. A very high percentage of its members served in the Army, and after the war they came back with a broader outlook and a strengthened determination. Between 1917 and 1920 the annual contribution was increased from one shilling to twenty-four shillings; and a full-time secretary—the present writer—was engaged, the first full-time officer in any Civil Service association outside the Post Office. The Association set to work to get rid of the multiplicity of small societies, and to make itself *the* organisation for clerical workers in Government Departments. By recruitment and absorption it grew fast. A few hundred strong in 1917, it is today 60,000 strong, and covers the area previously occupied by thirty or forty societies. The unconventionality of its methods, and its success in improving Civil Service conditions, led many organisations

in other parts of the Service towards effective Trade Unionism. Thus the Executive Officers and the Intermediate Grade transformed their organisations, appointed full-time officers, raised contributions, and grew in strength and influence. The Customs and Excise Federation has followed a similar course; and so have the Association of Officers of Taxes, and the Ministry of Labour Staff Association, which caters for employment exchange staffs. Soon there were only three bodies of any substantial size in the clerical field—the C.S.C.A., the Association of Officers of Taxes, and the Ministry of Labour Staff Association. The C.S.C.A. stands for further amalgamation. In default of this, it is now discussing the formation of a federal body with the Inland Revenue Staff Federation (formerly A.O.T.) and the M.L.S.A. with power to determine all wage-agreements.

The effects of the war were also felt in the Technical Grades. These are not numerous, but they embrace many different professions. Few, in each department, they began with small Departmental Associations of a nominal kind. But after the war they came together to form the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, with full-time officers. This body, however, still retains a federal character which militates against its effectiveness. Similarly the Association of Government Minor and Manipulative Grades, which in 1918 numbered only a few hundreds, has now about 5,000 members. Only the Association of First Division Civil Servants remains broadly unaffected in structure and outlook.

The war also produced a definite change in political and social outlook. Before the war practically all the Service associations (outside the Post Office) remained aloof from the general Labour movement. The C.S.C.A., however, allied itself openly with the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress, and other bodies followed its example. The line which the C.S.C.A. and other bodies took in the General Strike brought down on them Section V of the Trade Union Act of 1927, which made it illegal

for Civil Servants to affiliate to outside political or industrial organisations. Though formal affiliation was thus terminated, there remains, up to and including the Clerical Grades (that is, up to salary limits of, say, £400 a year), a much more widespread recognition of community of interest with wage-earners generally than in the past. It is, however, doubtful whether, if the legal ban were removed, many of the Service Unions, except the Union of Post Office Workers, would reaffiliate. This is due to widespread disillusionment with the Labour Party, and the ingrained conservatism of the Trades Union Congress. Civil Servants as a class are not a radically revolutionary group, but on the whole their minds are practical and sequential in their working. They can understand the arguments for or against a given line of policy, but not a mixture of all policies and of none.

War and post-war conditions profoundly altered the machinery for dealing with Service disputes. During the war an Arbitration Board (one labour representative, one employers' representative, and an independent chairman) was set up to decide on certain classes of dispute—emoluments, leave, and hours of labour. In the post-war economy reaction, which hit the Civil Service particularly hard, this Board was abolished, on the ground that it tended to put a premium on disagreement in discussions. The Service Associations thereupon promptly made Parliament itself a court of appeal, and after a defeat in the division lobbies in 1923, the Government apparently concluded that defeats before the Arbitration Court were less disastrous than defeats in the House of Commons. Accordingly arbitration was re-established, for a time under the Industrial Court. Compulsory arbitration still exists, and is now worked through the machinery of a special Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal.

Arbitration, of course, presupposes prior discussion and negotiation. By 1918 the development of the Service had compelled the Treasury to abandon its position of detachment in relation to Civil Service Associations. In particular,

the Treasury's refusal to receive written representations direct, and the refusal to allow oral representations by deputation from the Associations, went by the board. Not until 1919, however, did the new freedom crystallise into regular machinery for the discussion and settlement of Staff problems.

Fortune, meanwhile, had thrown a card into the lap of the Service Associations—the report of the Whitley Committee, and the Government's warm commendation of it to employers and Trade Unions generally. Service Associations promptly claimed that the Government should apply to its own employees the principles and practices which it recommended to others. After an astute and persistent agitation the Government was compelled to agree to the establishment of Whitleyism in the Civil Service.

By agreement between the Government and the Service Associations a National Whitley Council was established to deal with matters common to the whole Service and with the wages and conditions of classes employed in two or more departments. In each department a departmental Whitley Council was established to deal with departmental aspects of general problems and with the conditions of classes peculiar to the department. These Councils were supplemented by Office Whitley Committees where necessary. In all cases there was equal representation of Staff Associations and the Administration; decisions were reached by agreement, each side voting as a unit; and agreements, on being reported to the Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer, were to become operative, subject only to the overriding power of Parliament. This machinery consolidated the process of making the Service conscious of itself as a unit. Previously, there had been from time to time *ad hoc* combinations on some matters of general importance. But these were rare and ephemeral. Now, on such issues as superannuation arrangements, subsistence allowances, removal expenses, sick leave, substitution pay, salary adjustments on promotion, etc.,

the underlying principles affect the whole Service. The obligation under the Whitley system to constitute a 'Staff Side', representing the entire Service, to sit opposite an 'Official Side', representing the Administration, forced the Associations into what was, in effect, a Federation of Service Associations, capable of speaking for the Service as a whole.

There is, indeed, an important exception. The Association of First Division Civil Servants, comprising the chosen one thousand or so Administrative Officers who occupy the vital directing positions, plus the Inspectors of Taxes (the Administrative Grade of the Inland Revenue Department), quite early found themselves out of place on the Staff Side of joint negotiating bodies. The line taken by the U.P.W. and the C.S.C.A. during the General Strike made them still more uncomfortable, and since then they have not sat on the Staff Side of the National Whitley Council. I do not think that, as a class, they suffer thereby, for they occupy such key-positions that they can do as well by private deals with the Administration as by open combat. This 'private deal' method relieves them of the necessity of too close associative contact with those who are officially their subordinates.

Thus the Service is now pretty well covered by a network of Associations, and formal negotiating machinery has been working for a number of years. Let it not be assumed, however, that all is well in the Civil Service. In the first place, 'grading', as distinct from pay, is not susceptible to arbitration. And it is perfectly possible, by the manipulation of grading, to undo much of what is achieved in regard to rates of pay. Next, superannuation questions are also outside the scope of arbitration, and these—especially the disregarding for pensions of 'unestablished service' put in prior to establishment—lead to much trouble. Again, even on 'arbitrable' questions, real power on the Arbitration Court is with the chairman, whose training and associations make him averse to radical change. Occasionally, as in the 'Departmental Classes' case which

led to the threat of a stay-in strike a year or so ago, and again recently in the case of Grade IV Clerks in the War Department, a radical award is achieved. But this is the exception. A witticism current in the Service, and largely true, proclaims that "Whitleyism is a device for saying 'No' to all claims by instalments; arbitration is a device for saying 'No' to all claimants one by one; and a Royal Commission is a device for saying 'No' to all claimants at one go."

Moreover, certain elements militate against vigorous Civil Service Trade Unionism—the pension system, which makes the strike weapon practically unusable; the peculiar psychology generated by the atmosphere and traditions of the public service; and the 'social embrace', which has resulted, in recent years, from the network of joint machinery between the Staff and Official Sides.

In the early days of Civil Service Trade Unionism, to be an agitator was to court instant dismissal, and at best to put a great barrier in the way of advancement. Today, it would not be a very great exaggeration to say that to be an agitator is the quickest way to secure promotion. The Whitley system has the effect of bringing to the notice of the Official Side the brighter spirits among the Staff. This frequently leads to promotion and the loss of valuable warriors to the Associations.

Moreover, it must be frankly admitted that, in many areas, the growth of associations had not by any means been paralleled by an increase in the will to struggle. In all forms of organisation there is a tendency, once they are established, to suffer from increasing 'institutionalism'. Organisations tend to value themselves rather than the purposes for which they were created. We have seen this process exhibited very strikingly in the history of the general Trade Union movement and of the Labour Party. Civil Service Trade Unionism is not exempt from the same devitalising influence. In large areas of the Service, it could well afford to be much more vigorous

and dynamic than it is. And, since nothing stands still, unless it becomes so, the Civil Service Unions will tend more and more towards a form of 'House Unionism', which, much more than any opposition which employers can bring to bear, is fatal to the existence and development of real Trade Unionism.

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE POST
OFFICE

by

FRANCIS ANDREWS

Editor of *The Post*.

THE FIRST RECOGNITION of Trade Unionism in the Post Office was tardy, yet it was a step forward from the individual flunkeyism which patronage on the one side and excessive humility on the other had engendered.

It was in 1899 that the Duke of Norfolk expressed his readiness to consider and discuss representations brought to him by the Postmen's Federation, or any other body. He laid it down, however, that the representations must be through official channels, and by officers directly concerned. Obviously these were seriously limiting clauses. The Official Channel meant that any representation had to run the gauntlet of Official endorsements, and the clause insisting that only officers concerned should speak of their grievances cut out the advocacy of real Trade Union representatives. This concession amounted to little more than allowing the members to present a 'round robin'.

In 1902 Austen Chamberlain made recognition more elastic. He accepted memorials sent to him direct, including representations from the Postmen's Federation signed by the Secretary, who was not in the Service but was a 'full time' officer. Obviously the beginning of real Trade Union representation can be fixed in 1902-3. But in 1906 the Liberal Postmaster-General, Mr. Sydney Buxton, informed the Associations that he was prepared "frankly to recognise any duly constituted Association or

Federation of Postal Servants". He expressed his willingness to receive representations "relating to the service as a whole, or on matters affecting the class or classes of servants of which the Association is representative". Although he bowed a little towards 'individualism' by declaring that representations would carry much greater weight if made by members directly affected, this concession in 1906 was universally regarded as the grant of official recognition.

One immediate effect was a canalising of Trade Union activity. Memorials addressed to the Postmaster-General by Associations increased from 45 in 1905 to 630 in 1911. This beginning has developed into a regular interchange of secretarial letters on all matters, copies of which are given pride of place in the Service journals. Its development is also of great significance to Trade Union history. From the days of the spare time officer and voluntary worker the Unions have progressed to a recognition which is much more than acceptance by the Department of their right to speak for the people. Since 1920 the tendency, with its background of Whitleyism, has been to admit the Unions into joint consideration of Post Office problems.

From the beginning there has been an intellectual curiosity in the Post Office mind. The gibes of 'ultra servility', of 'top-hatted shabby genteelism' have been well and truly earned at times, but in spite of patronage in early recruiting and of snobbery as between grades there has always been an intellectual standing of some consequence. This has led to a multiplication of small societies and coteries keenly enthusiastic for new ways of life, for reforms, art, music and the drama.

This keenness in its political sense ran into the mould of the earlier Associations. Little bands of Socialists were to be found at Conferences, a keener appreciation of politics than was allowed by the rules was always present. Marx and Morris had their place. But of the movements that were to leave the mark of their impact on Postal Trade Unionism we must emphasise that of the National Guildsmen and Workers' Control. Workers' Control

blossomed from theory to action in the U.P.W. as early as 1921 (Edinburgh) when a party of Guildsmen moved, and the Conference confirmed by a large majority, an amendment to Union rules which ran as follows:

“The organisation of Post Office Workers into a comprehensive Industrial Union with a view to the Service being ultimately conducted and managed as a National Guild.”

That was afterwards modified in the programme to read:

“Joint management of the Post Office in conjunction with the State and development of the Service on lines of increased public usefulness,”

which is but a pale shadow of the first conception. Nevertheless the rule and the programme still stand. These two ideas and the conviction behind them have qualified U.P.W. activity enormously. Pioneering work has been done along the lines of a responsible share in control. So much of it has been done without written statute that it is hard to set it forth in rule and regulation; but the whole spirit of Post Office Trade Union negotiation is today coloured by the fact that the Unions have no fear of executive responsibility and are keenly alive to the fact that the ‘last word’ euphemistically called ‘executive action’ will have to come to be as jointly exercised as are other functions at the present time.

The record from 1899 onwards has been one of progress in the official mind. Whether or not it is fair for the Unions to claim that they have converted the Administration to one progressive idea after another we leave on one side. But the Post Office Trade Unionist of today knows that his Union is at once jealous of its prerogative of joint consultation and keen to preserve every regulation or agreement that embodies that prerogative.

A story of the early days is one of struggle between an Administration with ideas of discipline and control more

attributable to the military than to the civil power. Extra duty without pay was a favourite form of 'torture', and as this was often specially reserved for Sunday, the cruelty of it will be readily understood. Progress along the scale of wages was hindered by barriers between one class and another. The maximum for telegraphists in the third class, for instance, might be a long halting point before a vacancy allowed the men to enter the class above.

Wages for all grades were utterly inadequate, and if an increment can be said to be something to look forward to, then all Post Office people of those days were permanently enlisted in a band of hope.

Authorities differ as to when Trade Unionism in the Post Office began. The date of the creation of the Postal Telegraph Clerks' Association is given as 1881; that of the United Kingdom Postal Clerks' Association as 1887. These were followed by the Postmen's Federation and the Fawcett Association in 1890 and 1891 respectively. The P.O.E.U. as 'The Lineman's Movement' was founded in 1887.

Early Post Office Trade Unionism followed grade or craft organisation. Telegraphy was then a matter of much skill and long apprenticeship, and also of physical adaptability. Postal work bore also strong individual features. It could be argued that the same applies to these jobs now, but we stress here the fact that the workers in these divisions, coming as they did at the beginning of Trade Union consciousness, were imbued with the first ideas, and so the field of organisation for them was their immediate surroundings.

As Trade Unionism progressed, however, so did Trade Union consciousness. The manipulative grades grew into the acceptance of each other's vital importance, and there was always alive a desire to get together. The first result of this came in 1914, when the postal clerks and the telegraphists, together with all indoor workers who performed both duties in amalgamated offices, formed themselves into one society—the Postal and Telegraph Clerks'

Association. This Society, whose Secretary was a full-time officer, and whose Executive Council was elected without reservation from all the grades covered, included in its ranks telephonists lately come over from the National Telephone Co. It concerned itself with what are known in the Service as 'indoor' questions. In the wider field it began to be aware of the value of direct parliamentary representation. Meanwhile the other Associations had been ploughing their own furrows, but national agitation through the Joint Committee method commenced in earnest in 1915 when the National Joint Committee got to grips with general questions, especially the rising cost of living. In spite of difficulties, and especially during the war years, much good work was done by the N.J.C. This good work was an apprenticeship as far as the manipulative workers were concerned.

In 1920 the manipulative grades followed the logic of development. They formed the whole of postal Trade Unionism as far as they were concerned into an amalgamated Union. In this amalgamation, which was remarkably thorough, an Executive Council of nineteen members was to be elected from the whole of the membership without distinction as to grade or section. Reservations in the early days were used as a temporary measure to meet the charge that the smaller grade might eventually find itself swamped. But in the course of time these reservations have disappeared, and today a man of the lowest paid grade of the Post Office may rise to Executive rank on his performance at Conference, on proof of his grip of general Trade Union principles and of postal Trade Unionism.

That there should be secessionist movements from such a downright conception as this was inevitable. But never in the history of the Union have secessionists come within hailing distance of breaking down the essential unity of amalgamation. Perhaps the nearest to this came in 1921 when the Union of Post Office Workers, having set aside an increased subscription to form a Strike Fund, was faced

with an acute difference of opinion as to the strike, as such, and the feasibility of a strike in the Post Office. There was a large defection from the ranks of the Union of Post Office Workers. In face of this silent objection the Union decided at its Conference in 1922 to suspend the Strike Policy.

This stage seems to mark the Union's definite turning over to such policy of negotiation as it pursues today. The other event which has helped to mould Post Office Trade Unionism arose out of the national stoppage of 1926. Post Office servants shared the universal sympathy for the miners at the time of that historical dispute. How could it be otherwise? To them the crude method of bludgeoning working people into the acceptance of reductions, and the crude resistance to this by paralysing industry, were significant things. The least informed postal worker could not understand why the mining industry did not possess negotiating machinery equal to his own. The statements advanced (by those who pretended to know the mind of the postal workers) that the postal workers were anxious to join in the General Strike were absurd. The Post Office Trade Unionist was prepared to help the miner in his own way, and most generously he did it. It would appear, however, that this tangible sympathy was enough to condemn Post Office men and women as 'disloyal'. In this case, of course, disloyalty meant any criticism of the Government. Whether there was any panic about what happened afterwards, or whether it was a deliberate attempt to create a 'lackey' service, we do not know. We might even be generous enough to argue that the sponsors of Clause V of the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act did not foresee the whole of the consequences of the Bill.

Post Office Trade Unionists had argued for years that their standard of life was determined by the Treasury, which inspired the Department always to argue that that standard must bear strict relation to the standard of the working class as a whole. In that connection,

therefore, Postal workers could never be separated from the economic fate of the working class. That is why Clause V was a contradiction in the mouth of the Treasury, and that is why it will always be an irritant.

On the political side the Union of Post Office Workers had stood for direct parliamentary representation, in that it worked that nominees, aided by its funds, should assist in handling Post Office questions in the House. It was following a very vivid example set by those who understood parliamentary tactics. The Post Office Trade Unions were affiliated to the Labour Party. Clause V of the Trades Disputes Act cut them clean away here, as it cut them away from the Trades Union Congress. They were left worse off than their brethren in Trade Unionism generally. Even contracting-in was denied them, and the only basis left for support of the idea of direct parliamentary representation was a voluntary Society for those who were prepared to support it. This voluntary Society, known as the Direct Parliamentary Representation Society, exists, and today holds funds to support the candidature of its nominees.

Some description of the channels into which Trade Union negotiation flows is necessary. Whitleyism, the first of these, has always had its critics, and the keenest point of their criticism has been that the Round Table overshadowed by the commodity theory of labour can never be more than a development of House Unionism. Whitleyism was declared to be Capitalism's way of putting strikes into cold storage and of giving earnest enthusiasts a substitute for control.

As one who has urged these criticisms freely enough, I hope to carry conviction when I say that the critics forgot one thing. If men imbued with a spirit of Workers' Control go determinedly into Whitleyism they use it with advantage to the workers' case. That has been so in Post Office Trade Unionism. The Post Office Whitley Council deals with matters appertaining to the undertaking as a whole. This

also applies on the engineering side to the Whitley Council presided over by the Engineer-in-Chief, on which the Post Office Engineering Union plays its part. It can truly be said of both the Whitley Councils that there is no 'touching the cap' by the workers.

From the National Body we move to the local Whitley Councils. On these we see a testing of the Branch Official's statesmanship and power of constructive negotiation. Many a fussle takes place between the Branch Officials and the Administration, and Trade Union insistence upon the spirit of national agreements is refreshing.

Of course there are difficulties. Sometimes a branch rises from the table and returns to its tents.

There is a proviso in Post Office Whitleyism that a Union may send a representative to sit on a local Whitley. The Union then sends its man to face a Headquarters representative and the two 'higher authorities' talk across the negotiation table. This is one way of meeting a major difficulty.

The status of Post Office Trade Unionism in Whitleyism is reflected also in the standing of Branch Officials as such. At the instance of the Union, Mr. C. R. Attlee, when Postmaster-General, granted a status to Branch Officers that gives those officers the right to full dignity of their position when dealing with local administrators. This decision was afterwards confirmed by Sir Kingsley Wood. The result is that Post Office Trade Unionism possesses Branch Officers of high dignity. This fact of recognition marks them off from their heroic predecessors who often, refusing even to speak to administrators, carried on Post Office agitation as long range artillery practice—through the Press, the House of Commons, and even in the sporadic strike. Today so many things are set forth in agreement that the fight is often waged around the retention of definite Union gains which are so enshrined.

Negotiations on major issues follow certain well-defined lines. Wages are a good example. The mandate having been received, the Union prepares its case. Then follows

a letter to the Postmaster-General, which, in its turn, is followed by discussion. The tendency today is to waste no time. A quick settlement follows negotiation, or a comprehensive claim which the Department is unwilling to touch is taken to the Civil Service Arbitration Court.

The earliest agitation was for a Select Committee of the House of Commons. The history of these and other Special Committees often makes melancholy reading, but the idea that Post Office Trade Unionists, being public servants, must make out a public case underlies all claims even up to the present. That is why Post Office Trade Unionism sets so great a store by good and accurate publicity.

The big battalion of over 120,000 members is the Union of Post Office Workers. The sectional societies amalgamated into the Union had honourable histories of fighting and agitating. No one will deny that the U.P.W. is something more than the big battalion. Its spirit and efficiency are the accepted standards of Post Office Trade Unionism.

Working in close contact with the U.P.W. is the Post Office Engineering Union, whose history began in 1887 when one hundred telegraph linemen working in the Post Office became vocal on their grievances. Many of these had travelled from as far north as Liverpool and Belfast to express what they felt about inadequate pay and long hours.

This Union has grown to its present membership as a single unit which, aiming at first to express the grievances of telegraph linemen, passed on to organise into a Trade Union the rank and file of the engineering staff.

The development of the telegraphs and telephones along the line of invention and machinery has been followed by the organisation of the P.O.E.U., which in the course of the years has made several changes in its title. In 1932 a secessionist body from the Union, with the title of the 'Telephone and Telegraph Engineering Guild' returned

to the fold and the Union was then reorganised, and set up for itself Sectional Councils for the internal and external staffs

The P.O.E.U. is one of five Engineering and Stores technical organisations which compose the Staff Side of the Engineering and Stores Whitley Council, a body which has its District Whitley Committees as counterpart to the Branch Whitley Committees on the manipulative side.

The other purely Post Office Trade Unions are the Federation of Post Office Controlling Officers and the Sub-Postmasters' Federation. The Controlling Officers' Union includes all officers promoted to supervising grades from the rank and file. A noteworthy feature of its membership is its periodical recruitment of prominent U.P.W. leaders. Its activities cover a parallel field with that of the Union of Post Office Workers, and its work is mainly on wages and conditions of the supervising grades. It has co-operated with the other Unions time and again on the implementing of national and local agreements, and its members help to form part of the local Whitley Councils throughout the country.

The Sub-Postmasters' Federation has a membership of 16,600. Its members are the scale payment sub-postmasters who do Post Office work often in addition to another activity. The sub-postmaster has his own peculiar difficulties. His Federation is represented on National and Local Whitleyism.

The history of Post Office Trade Unionism has had its humour, its drama and even its tragedies, all of which might tempt the writer to more than historical narrative. Of one thing it stands assured. Its enthusiasm and its idealism are guarantees of it. It is sure of a future as Trade Unionism rather than House Unionism, a future of class consciousness rather than that acceptance of the alleged inevitable which is erroneously supposed to mark the Civil Servant.

TEACHERS' ORGANISATIONS

by

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TEACHERS OF ENGLAND and Wales have formed many associations, some for the development and encouragement of particular school subjects, others for protection and security.

As examples of the former I may mention the Historical Association and the Science Masters' Association. The membership of each runs into a few hundreds, the subscription is ten shillings, each holds an annual conference at which are discussed the problems connected with the advancement of the methods of teaching the subjects concerned, and each association publishes a journal.

The protective associations are much larger. Their annual subscriptions are about a guinea or thirty shillings, they profess to cater for the material and professional welfare of their members, and they intervene in public affairs on educational questions. Most of the associations publish press organs.

Chief amongst the protective associations is the National Union of Teachers. It is open to qualified teachers of both sexes and all grades. The largest part of its membership consists of teachers in public elementary schools, but most other types of school and college also are represented within its ranks.

Certain other organisations cater for elementary school teachers. There is one for men (National Association of Schoolmasters) and another for women (National Union

of Women Teachers); there is one for head teachers (National Association of Head Teachers) and another for assistant teachers (National Federation of Class Teachers). The Schoolmasters' Association and the Women's Union each refuses membership to members of the N.U.T.; but the Head Teachers' Association and the Class Teachers' Federation largely overlap the N.U.T. in membership. The Class Teachers' Federation, indeed, has as one of its objects the strengthening of the N.U.T. There is also an organisation of uncertificated teachers called the National Union of School Teachers, about which little is heard. A large number of uncertificated teachers are in the N.U.T.

Secondary school teachers are organised in four associations, one each for head masters, head mistresses, assistant masters and assistant mistresses; and there is an organisation for technical teachers. These five associations contain the majority of teachers in secondary schools and technical institutions, a minority being found in the N.U.T.

Of the protective associations, the largest, most wealthy, most powerful and most influential is the N.U.T. Its numerical strength is more than double that of all the others added together. It was founded in 1870, and was at first confined to elementary school teachers possessing the Government certificate. In the year 1888 it broadened its appeal and opened its ranks to teachers in other than elementary schools, so that although the majority of its members are still in elementary schools it has a substantial following in other types of school and institution. After the war it opened its doors to uncertificated teachers; this is the technical name for teachers of a certain lower qualification than the certificated teachers. There is a class of teacher employed in elementary schools, especially in rural areas, known as supplementary teachers. These need have no educational qualifications at all. They are not eligible for membership of the Union. The membership of the N.U.T. today (1938) is about 154,000; its accumulated funds amount to over a million and a half pounds.

The Teachers' Provident Society, which is an offshoot of the Union, provides sick benefits, loans for house mortgage and other friendly society advantages at an economical rate, and has accumulated funds of over six million pounds. There is a benevolent and charitable adjunct (Benevolent and Orphan Fund) which looks after widows, orphans and other dependants of teachers, runs orphanages and helps teachers in financial distress. This is financed by voluntary subscriptions. The most recent addition to the Union's associated organisations is the Teachers' Assurance Company, which has issued its first annual report showing a considerable measure of success. The Union publishes a weekly organ—*The Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher's Chronicle*. The headquarters of the Union and its associated bodies are at Hamilton House, a large building near St. Pancras Station. The Union consists of local and county associations, through which alone membership is possible. These associations hold meetings and conferences, conduct negotiations with their respective local authorities, influence public opinion in the localities, and send delegates to the annual conference of the Union which is held at Easter. The Union conference, a gathering of over 2,000 delegates, decides major questions of policy; and an executive committee of thirty-seven is entrusted with the control of affairs from Easter to Easter. The members of the Executive are elected in eleven Districts; the Vice-President and Treasurer are elected annually by the whole membership. The Vice-President automatically succeeds to the Presidency.

The Union has a staff of officials at headquarters and a staff of divisional organisers in the country. It supports several Members of Parliament. As a Union it is not associated with any one of the political parties, but it finances candidates in all three, and has two Members of Parliament on its staff—one on each side of the House.

The most impressive achievements of the Union are to be found in three directions: salaries and superannuation, security of tenure, and educational reform. Though the

Union has always worked for improvements in salaries, yet improvements came but slowly until after the war, when, as the result of strikes in various areas waged by the Union, three joint committees of local education authorities and teachers were set up which have become known, after their first Chairman, as the Burnham Committees. These Committees drew up scales of salaries for teachers in elementary, secondary and technical schools respectively; they have become a permanent part of the administrative machinery of the national education system, and the scales they fix are applicable to teachers in all publicly maintained or aided schools. The scales were not accepted by all local authorities in the first instance, but after a process of pressure applied by the Union, pressure which sometimes took the form of strikes, the recalcitrant local authorities gave in, and today loyalty to the Burnham Committees is universal.

The whole of the teachers' panel of the Burnham Committee for teachers in elementary schools is composed of members of the N.U.T., and the Union is represented also on the other two Committees.

An extremely important side of the work of the Union is that of its legal department. Mrs. Sidney Webb, in her famous Report on English Teachers and Their Professional Organisations (*New Statesman*, September 25th, 1915) said that the Union's command of "extremely skilled and, in some cases, of ruthlessly efficient legal advocacy has contributed more than any other factor to increase the personal freedom and raise the social status of the elementary school teacher". Teachers are protected by this department in all the exigencies of their work. All questions connected with their tenure of office and their relations with inspectors, school managers, local authorities, the Board of Education and the public are the subject of constant vigilance. Cases have been taken to the Courts when necessary, and they have usually ended successfully for the teachers. The result is that the position of the teacher so far as tenure is concerned is probably more

secure than that of any other salary or wage-earner except the Civil Servant; and this security in the case of the teacher is combined with a freedom to participate in political, religious and public affairs generally that is limited in the case of the Civil Servant.

It is through its influence in public affairs, indeed, that the Union has made some of its most far-reaching achievements. It lays its views before candidates in municipal and Parliamentary elections; it keeps in constant touch through its local associations with individual local authorities, and through its Executive with the Board of Education and the Association of Education Committees. It frequently sends deputations to interview the Minister for Education or the permanent officials of the Board of Education; at times of crisis it has organised mass lobbying of the members of the House of Commons; on one occasion, indeed, it brought about by this method the defeat of a Government. It organises public meetings on behalf of educational reform and the welfare of the child, and to this end it co-operates financially and otherwise with such bodies as the Workers' Educational Association and the School Age Council. The many improvements in educational conditions which have taken place in the 'past seventy years, from the abolition of payment by results to the emancipation of the half-timer, and from the prison-like schools of the 'seventies to the open-air schools and playing-fields of today, have all been helped forward, if not initiated, by the public campaigns of the Union. Today, by means of meetings and other public functions, the work of its press department and the efforts of its own press organ, it keeps constantly before the public and the authorities the need for further reforms. The other associations of teachers employ methods similar to those described above, on a scale proportionate to their size and resources.

The Union interests itself closely in international educational affairs. It is affiliated to the World Federation of Educational Associations and the International Federation of Teachers' Associations. It sends representatives to the

Conferences of both these organisations, and keeps up a close association with the other member-associations in between the full meetings.

It is necessary to refer to the other associations that cater for elementary school teachers before passing on to the secondary teachers' associations. The members of the National Association of Schoolmasters and the National Union of Women Teachers were originally within the N.U.T. or friendly to it. Today both bodies are hostile to the Union and will not allow their members to belong to it. The N.A.S. contains about 10,000 members. The N.U.W.T. does not publish its membership, though it is doubtful if it has so many as the N.A.S.

The N.U.W.T. was formed at the time of the women's suffrage agitation; it is now aiming at equal pay for men and women in the teaching profession and equality of men and women in promotion to headships and higher educational posts. In all this it is in line with the N.U.T., but it holds the view that such a policy can more effectively be advocated by a women's Union than by a mixed Union.

The N.A.S. was formed when the N.U.T. at the end of the war adopted the principle of equal pay for men and women. It opposes equal pay because, in its opinion, equal pay can only be achieved at the expense of the men. It insists, too, upon men teachers for boys, a point upon which it is in line with the N.U.T. With a disregard for logic it urges that the head teachers of mixed schools should be men. It opposes the employment of men as assistant teachers under women heads.

Both these organisations wage constant war upon the N.U.T., but in the twenty years (approximately) of their existence they have not come near succeeding in their aim of breaking that body into two. The membership of the N.U.T. has increased by about 40,000 since they were formed. Neither body has representation on the Burnham Committee. Associated with each is a provident and a benevolent organisation, and each association publishes a journal (*The New Schoolmaster* and *The Woman Teacher*).

The National Association of Head Teachers consists of about 10,000 head masters and head mistresses of elementary schools. It deals particularly with matters affecting head teachers. It holds an annual conference and publishes a monthly journal. Its policy does not differ in any substantial particular from that of the N.U.T., with which body it is on friendly terms. It has no representation on the Burnham Committee, and does not bulk largely in the formation of national educational policy. Its influence is chiefly exercised in the localities through its local associations.

The National Federation of Class Teachers consists of about 10,000 assistant masters and mistresses in elementary schools. It is concerned with improving the status and conditions of service of class teachers. The Federation came into existence many years ago at a time when it became apparent that many certificated teachers were doomed to remain assistants all their lives for the reason that there were not enough headships to go round. The Federation has always worked in close friendship with the N.U.T., and one of its objects is to help to strengthen the Union. It holds an annual conference at which class teachers' affairs and general educational policy are discussed.

The four associations for secondary school teachers are the Incorporated Association of Head Masters, the Incorporated Association of Head Mistresses, the Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters, and the Incorporated Association of Assistant Mistresses. Each has its own staff, and each holds an annual conference. But all four bodies are housed at the same address in Gordon Square, W.C.1. The Assistant Masters number nearly 12,000; the Assistant Mistresses nearly 9,000; the Head Masters 900 and the Head Mistresses 600. Their relations with one another are very cordial and they act together in most educational affairs, the united body being known as the Joint Four. This organisation is the next most influential body of teachers after the N.U.T. In secondary education, indeed, it occupies the position occupied by the N.U.T.

in elementary education, with the qualification that a number of secondary school teachers belong to the N.U.T. The four secondary associations appoint the bulk of the members of the teachers' panel of the Secondary Burnham Committee. This means that the salary policy of the secondary school teachers is in their hands. At the same time they are on such friendly terms with the N.U.T. that no big question of salary policy is decided without consultation between the Joint Four and the Union.

Each of the four secondary associations carries on protective and educational activities of a similar character to those carried on by the N.U.T., though necessarily on a scale proportionate to their smaller numbers. Like the N.U.T. they are affiliated to various international teachers' associations.

Teachers in technical schools and institutions are organised mainly in the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions (the A.T.T.I.), but some are members of the N.U.T. The A.T.T.I. has a membership of about 2,000, and publishes a journal (*The Technical Journal*). Its offices are in the same building as those of the four secondary associations, with which bodies it is on terms of friendliness and co-operation. It has the largest representation of any association on the teachers' panel of the Technical Burnham Committee, the N.U.T. being also represented. Its other activities are similar to those of the Secondary Associations and the N.U.T.

ONE ORGANISATION IN SCOTLAND

In Scotland there is not the multiplicity of organisations that exists in England and Wales. The Educational Institute contains nearly 25,000 teachers of all grades. There has been no secession by men or women, and since the amalgamation in 1918 of the Institute with the Secondary Education Association and the Class Teachers' Federation all sections of teachers have consented to function within the Institute.

The Institute negotiates salaries and pensions for all sections of the profession, and it influences public opinion, Parliament, and the local authorities in ways similar to those adopted by English teachers' organisations.

The Institute holds an annual conference. Subject to the decisions of this conference the business of the Institute is conducted by a Council of about ninety members, not less than a quarter of which must be secondary teachers and not less than a quarter class teachers. The members of the Council are elected by the local associations with the proviso that ten members shall be elected by the secondary teachers, and five by the Roman Catholic teachers. The Council meets five times a year. In addition there is an Executive consisting of sixteen elected members together with the officials which has powers of action in between meetings of the Council.

The Institute is affiliated to various international organisations, and publishes a weekly journal (*The Scottish Educational Journal*).

OTHER GROUPS

THERE REMAIN UNDESCRIBED in the preceding chapters a host of Trade Unions, for the most part small, in industries and occupations to which space has not allowed the assigning of a special section. In some cases this is because the group itself is small; but in others it is because the organised workers are to be found mainly in the National Union of General and Municipal Workers or the Transport and General Workers' Union, and not in Unions confined to a particular trade.

Among manufacturing industries, the most notable omission is that of the food and drink trades. Together with the tobacco trades, these industries employ over 600,000 workers; but the total number of Trade Unionists belonging to Unions confined to them was at the end of 1936 only 31,000. To this total must be added an uncertain number of flour millers, biscuit makers, brewery workers, and workers employed in sugar factories, canneries, bacon factories, and a host of other establishments in which the general labour Unions have obtained a foothold. But, despite the predominance of male over female workers in the group as a whole—345,000 to 266,000—the great majority are unorganised.

The most important Trade Unions are in the bakery trades—the Amalgamated Union of Bakers and Confectioners (13,000), and the Scottish Union of Bakers and Confectioners (6,800). Both Unions consist mainly of men, but have women's sections with a few hundred members. Next in importance is the Journeyman Butchers' Federation (4,700)—again with only a very few women members. In

the tobacco trades there are two small societies, the Cigar and Tobacco Workers' Union (2,200), consisting mainly of women, and the Cigarette Machine Operators' Society (500), entirely men. Other tobacco workers are enrolled in the general labour Unions; but the majority of the 45,000 workers are unorganised.

The glass trades employ about 46,000 workers, mostly males. Of these about 20,000 are in the glass bottle trade, mainly in the North of England and in London. The Trade Unions in the industry are all small, and mainly local. The largest are the National Flint Glass Makers, with about 500 members, and the National Glass Workers' Association, with about 600. The London Glass Bottle Workers' Society has about 400, and the Lancashire Glass Bottle Makers' Association about 300. The Pressed Glass Makers of Sunderland and the Glass Bevellers' Society of Birmingham, with about 300 each, seem to be next in size. Some of these bodies have a very long Trade Union history: for example, the existing society of Flint Glass Makers dates back to 1849.

Brushmaking, again, is an ancient home of Trade Unionism, the National Society of Brushmakers (2,600) tracing its history back to 1778. To this trade also belongs the National League of the Blind (5,600).

The leather trades, excluding the boot and shoe industry, have a labour force of more than 80,000, of whom over 50,000 are men. But there are only two Unions of any size, the Amalgamated Society of Leather Workers, with rather more than 4,000 members, and the National Union of Leather Workers, with rather over 2,000. To these may be added the National Union of Glovers (1,400) and an unknown number organised in the general labour Unions. It is clear that in this group again organisation is weak.

The furniture and woodworking trades, apart from woodworkers employed in building and other industries, have 170,000 insured workers, of whom 127,000 are men. Some of these belong to the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, which has its main strength in the building industry. The

largest Union belonging to the furniture group is the National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association (18,000), paradoxically noted for its persistent left-wing tendencies and its remarkably low percentage of members paying the political levy (11 per cent). Other societies are the Amalgamated Union of Upholsterers (7,500) and the United French Polishers' London Society (1,100). In other branches of woodworking are the Amalgamated Society of Woodcutting Machinists (15,000), which has one or two small rivals, the Journeymen Coopers' Federation (4,000), made up of numerous small local societies, and the National Union of Packing Case Makers (3,000). Of a number of smaller societies, the largest is the General Union of Bedding Trade Workers (750). Here again there is manifestly room for a great improvement in organisation.

The chemical, paint, oil, match, ink, glue, etc., trades have altogether nearly a quarter of a million insured workers, of whom the majority are men. The brick, tile, and paper trades have another 112,000, almost all men, and the concrete, cement and by-product trades another 60,000. The mining and quarrying group, excluding the coal miners, adds 100,000 more. But in these groups what organisation exists is almost entirely in the general labour Unions. The North Wales Quarrymen's Union (8,000) is now a section of the Transport and General Workers; and the only remaining societies of any size are the Building and Monumental Workers' Association of Scotland (5,000), which is partly in the building trades but includes the granite workers of Aberdeen, and the Federation of Salt and Alkali Workers (1,700), which organises the Cheshire salt industry. Finally, among manual workers, the 200,000 operatives in laundries and dry cleaning, of whom more than three-quarters are women, are represented only by the 272 members of the National Laundry Workers' Union, which, after some successes in the years just after the war, has shrunk almost to nothing.

Among non-manual workers, the main groups have been covered in earlier chapters. In the amusement trades the

Actors' Equity, the Musicians' Union, and the Variety Artistes' Federation are all now outside the Trades Union Congress, though the Actors have fairly close associations with the London Trades Council through a common secretary, and the Musicians are actually affiliated to the L.T.C. Inside the T.U.C. are the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees (8,500), representing mainly the lower-paid grades, and two newer societies, the Film Artistes' Association and the Cine-Technicians' Association, each with rather over 1,000 members.

The British Medical Association, which is on the borderline of Trade Unionism, does not belong to the T.U.C. But the rival Medical Practitioners' Union is a recent Congress recruit, with nearly 5,500 members. The various Nurses' Associations can hardly be regarded as yet as Trade Unions, though Congress is at present actively promoting a 'Nurses' Charter', and some nurses in public hospitals are organised in the National Union of Public Employees. The Mental Hospital and Institutional Workers' Union, with 15,000 members, has long been affiliated to Congress, and the Women Public Health Officers' Association (1,700) is also in the T.U.C. The position in local Government generally is discussed elsewhere, in connection with the recent *rapprochement* between the T.U.C. and the National Association of Local Government Officers, which has about 100,000 members.

At this point the frontiers of Trade Unionism become very difficult to define. The various professional institutes of architects, surveyors, engineers of various sorts, and technicians in many other fields clearly fall outside these frontiers, though they are in fact often engaged in active defence of professional standards of remuneration and employment. The Trades Union Congress and the National Federation of Professional Workers are both doing their best to enlarge the frontiers of the movement by the inclusion of new groups of technical and professional workers; but so far progress has been slow, and not unaccompanied by the danger of a dilution of Trade

Union policy by the infusion of new elements which by no means regard themselves as participants in 'working-class solidarity'. It is highly desirable that the professional workers should be brought over to the working-class cause; but the Trade Union movement cannot afford to dilute its own policy in order to secure their support.

PART V

CONCLUSIONS

AN OUTLINE SURVEY

AT THE END of 1913, on the eve of the Great War, the Trade Unions of the United Kingdom had rather more than four million members. By the end of 1920 membership had risen to over eight and a quarter millions. It had actually doubled in seven years. Then, in the post-war slump, it fell rapidly. At the end of 1925, just before the General Strike, it was five and a half millions. The world depression brought it down to less than four and a half millions in 1933. By the end of 1936 it had risen again to 5,300,000. These totals are for Trade Unions of all types, and are gross figures returned to the Ministry of Labour. They considerably exceed at all dates the regular paying membership; but they are broadly valid for comparisons between one year and another.

But the totals of membership conceal important changes which have been taking place in the composition of the movement. Let us take two years in which the total membership was not very different—4,135,000 in 1913, and 4,383,000 in 1933. First compare these two years in respect of male and female membership.

	1913 000's	1933 000's	Change 000's
Males	3,702	3,655	—47
Females	433	728	+295
Total	4,135	4,383	+248

Broadly, in 1913 one out of ten Trade Unionists was a woman: in 1933 one out of seven.

The meaning of this change will be seen more clearly if we divide up the totals as between the principal industrial

or occupational groups. Here are the figures of Trade Union membership, split up into a dozen broad groupings, for the same two years.

	1913	1933		1913	1933
	thousands			thousands	
Mining	920	563	Other manufactures	57	69
Textiles	523	455	Agriculture	21	31
Clothing	108	153	Transport and		
Metals	560	519	General	1,039	1,115
Building and Wood-			Distributive and		
work	289	311	Commerce	120	268
Paper and Printing	91	186	Govt. and Teaching	347	648
			Miscellaneous	60	65

It appears from this table that, whereas total membership had risen by a quarter of a million, mining membership had fallen by well over 350,000, textile membership by nearly 70,000, and membership in the metal group by 40,000. On the other hand, the printing and paper trades had more than doubled their membership; distribution and commerce showed an even larger proportionate rise, and the public services group had also come near to doubling its strength. These three groups, taken together with the clothing trades, had risen by about 600,000, whereas the three older strongholds of Trade Unionism, mines, metals and textiles, had dropped by nearly half a million. Manifestly, the balance of the movement had been substantially changed. 'Blackcoats' and workers in the consumers' trades counted for more, and workers in the older heavy and export industries for less in the total Trade Union membership.

The following table, showing Trade Union membership under the same twelve headings for four key years, confirms this impression of the changing occupational composition of the movement. The figures for 1913 show the point which had been reached just before the war, after the years of unrest which had raised total membership from less than two millions in 1900 and just over two and a half millions in 1910 to well over four millions. The figures for 1920 represent the peak of Trade Union growth during and

immediately after the war, and those for 1925 the effects of post-war deflation and depression up to the eve of the General Strike. The 1933 figures, repeated here for convenience, show the double effects of the defeat of the General Strike and of the world economic depression; and, finally, those for 1936 show the beginnings of a recovery which advanced a good deal further in the course of 1937.

TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP BY GROUPS IN CERTAIN
YEARS

	1913	1920	1925	1933	1936
	000's	000's	000's	000's	000's
Agriculture	21	211	47	31	33
Mining	920	1,158	914	563	679
Metals	560	1,171	683	519	686
Textiles	523	834	626	455	429
Clothing	108	236	168	153	176
Building and Woodwork	289	650	401	311	356
Paper and Printing	91	227	207	186	204
Other Manufactures	57	140	84	69	70
Transport and General	1,039	2,497	1,534	1,115	1,504
Distribution and Commerce	120	400	222	268	324
Government and Teaching	347	671	530	648	765
Others	60	153	81	65	82
Male	4,135	8,348	5,497	4,383	5,308
Female	3,702	7,006	4,666	3,655	4,506
	433	1,342	831	728	802

On the basis of these figures a number of interesting comparisons can be made. If 1936 is compared with 1913 only two groups show actual decreases in membership. These are mining and textiles—the two big groups which have suffered most seriously and continuously from post-war contraction. Of these two, the miners' Unions have lost nearly a quarter of a million and the textile Unions nearly 100,000 members. On all the other groups membership has increased considerably in relation to pre-war totals. Transport and General labour, taken together as a single group, show the largest increase; but the Government Services and Teaching group is only a little way behind. These two, with Commerce and Distribution, which comes third, show a combined increase of well over a million,

and thus account for nearly the whole net increase of membership in the movement generally. Of the remainder, the Paper and Printing group has more than doubled.

A very different picture is presented if 1936 is compared with the post-war peak of 1920. On this basis only one group, Government Services and Teaching, shows an increase over the sixteen years. The drop is inconsiderable for Printing and Paper, and not very great for either Clothing or Distribution and Commerce. But all the other large groups show very big decreases. Transport and General Labour together have dropped by nearly a million, mining and metals by nearly half a million each, and textiles by 405,000. Even the building group, despite the high activity of housing over a large part of the post-war period and the existence in 1936 of a remarkable housing boom, shows a drop of 300,000. Finally, in agriculture, the Trade Unions catering solely for agricultural workers (excluding the agricultural workers enrolled in general labour Unions) were 211,000 strong in 1920, and only 34,000 in 1936.

This comparison enables us to measure to some extent the character of the Trade Unions' loss of ground. In mining, metals and textiles the decline in membership can be largely explained by the falling-off of production and employment in the industries concerned—though this is not the whole explanation; for the partial collapse of Trade Unionism in the woollen industry and the loss of members even in the more prosperous branches of engineering have also to be taken into account. No similar explanation can be invoked to account for the decline in the building trades, which is largely but by no means entirely due to a collapse of organisation among the less skilled workers, over a period when the conditions for recruitment ought to have been highly favourable. Most serious of all is the falling off in the Transport and General Labour group; for though there has been some contraction of employment in the railways and in shipping, the rapid growth of road transport and the advance of the mass-production industries which use

a high proportion of less skilled labour have obviously been expanding the field of recruitment open to the Unions in this group at a prodigious rate. The decline of nearly a million in the numbers organised is therefore a clear measure of the Trade Union failure, up to 1936, to master the problems of organisation in the mass-production establishments. Since 1936 a good deal more progress has been made in road transport; but even in 1938 the major problem of the less skilled factory operatives remains unsolved.

The divergencies between Trade Union structure and the classification of industries and occupations under the Unemployment Insurance scheme make it impossible to arrive at any general estimate of Trade Union strength in different industries in relation to the numbers eligible for membership. Certain very rough calculations can, however, be made. We know that, in the insured trades in general, Trade Unionism is very much weaker among female than among male workers; and for this reason it seems best to make the comparison separately for men and women. In the accompanying table I have set side by side, in the first two columns, the number of males over 16 years of age insured in July 1937 under the Unemployment Insurance Acts, and the number of male Trade Unionists at the end of 1936. The third and fourth columns give corresponding particulars for female workers. All figures are to the nearest thousand.

It must be emphasised that in many cases the figures are not fully comparable. In the metal and engineering trades, the food, drink and tobacco trades, and some others, a substantial fraction of the organised workers belong to general labour Unions, and not to craft or industrial Unions; and some other Unions include sections which would be classified as belonging to other groups for purposes of unemployment insurance. No more accurate comparison, seems, however, to be possible; and at any rate for a number of the groups the figures do provide a rough test of the degree of Trade Union organisation.

	Ins'd Males over 16 (July, 1937) 000's	T.U. Members. (Dec., 1936) 000's	T.U.C. Affil'd Members. (1937) 000's	Ins'd Females over 16 (July, 1937) 000's	T.U. Members. (Dec., 1936) 000's	T.U.C. Affil'd Females (1937) 000's
Agriculture and Gardening	651	33 ¹	32 ¹	39	—	—
Coalmining	865	672	536	4	2	—
Other mining and quarrying	102	5 ¹	9 ²	2	—	—
Concrete, cement and by-products	56	— ¹	— ¹	3	—	—
Bricks, Tiles, Pipes, etc.	100	— ¹	— ¹	6	—	—
Pottery and Glass	75	12	7	5 ¹	7	6
Chemicals, Soap, Matches, etc.	169	— ¹	1 ¹	62	— ¹	— ¹
Iron and Steel	272	87	86	14	1	1
Other Metal Manufactures	46	— ¹	— ¹	4	— ¹	— ¹
Engineering	741	592 ¹	404 ¹	81	6 ¹	1 ¹
Vehicles	380		29 ¹	36		— ¹
Shipbuilding	170		78 ¹	3		— ¹
Other metal trades	503		46 ¹	237		2 ¹
Cotton	144	112	74	264	154	112
Woollen and Worsted and Dyeing	165	72	63	161	34	27
Other Textile Trades	145	20 ¹	6 ¹	287	38 ¹	10 ¹
Leather trades	48	— ³	7	27	— ³	1
Boot and shoe	80	64	63	55	31	32
Other clothing trades	108	28	28	375	53	64
Food, drink & Tobacco	341	26 ¹	25 ¹	238	5 ¹	2 ¹
Printing and Paper	274	159	135	165	44	35
Building	1,023	298 ¹	281 ¹	12	—	—
Public Con-tracting	293			1	—	—
Furniture and Woodwork	212	53	42	37	5	4
Other Manu-facturing	100	15 ¹ 14	6 ¹	59	3 ¹	2 ¹
Railways	166 ⁴	446	444	11	6	5
Railways (all employees)	(562) ⁵			(23) ⁵		

	Ins'd Males over 16 (July, 1937) 000's	T.U. Members. Males (Dec., 1936) 000's	T.U.C. Affil'd Members. Males (1937) 000's	Ins'd Females over 16 (July, 1937) 000's	T.U. Members. Females (Dec., 1936) 000's	T.U.C. Affil'd Members. Females (1937) 000's
Road Transport	391	916 ⁶	523 ⁷	20	59 ⁶	21 ⁷
Docks, Har- bours, etc.	184			5		
Shipping	127	77	61	7	—	—
Distribution	1,278			783		
Commerce, Finance	181	251	48	88	73	12
Gas, Water and Electricity	209			10		
National and Local Govt.	470 ⁸	416	46 ⁹	47 ⁸	102	2 ⁹
Hotels and Restaurants	172	—	—	272	—	—
Professional Services	94	— ¹⁵	5	72	—	— ¹⁴
Entertainment and Sport	85	21	9	55	5	2
Laundries and Cleaning	38	— ¹	— ¹	135	— ¹	— ¹
Miscellaneous Occupations	105	45 ^{1 16}	— ¹	62	10 ^{1 16}	— ¹
Teachers	(417) ¹⁰	86	—	— ¹⁰	160	—
General Workers	— ¹¹	— ¹²	307 ¹³	— ¹¹	— ¹²	33 ¹³
Totals	10,598	4,506		3,789	802	

Notes to Table

¹ A substantial number of workers in these trades are enrolled in the general labour Unions

² Including the North Wales Quarrymen—who form an independent section of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

³ Included in Miscellaneous Manufacturing Trades below.

⁴ Insured workers only, i.e. not including permanent workers.

⁵ All employees of railway companies, 1936.

⁶ Including the entire membership of the general labour Unions in all industries and services.

⁷ Including the general labour membership of the Transport and General Workers, but not including the membership of the General and Municipal Workers, which is under 'General Labour'.

⁸ Insured workers only. Permanent Civil Servants are not insured.

⁹ Civil Service Unions are not allowed to affiliate to the T.U.C.

¹⁰ Teachers are not insured. The figure given is that of the total number of teachers from the industrial classification of the Census of 1931.

¹¹ Included elsewhere.

It can be seen from this table that the one group in which Trade Unionism is practically non-existent is that of hotel, club, and restaurant workers. Elsewhere there is, at the least, a nucleus of organisation in all the larger occupations.

Among men the highest percentages of organisation are in the coal mines and the cotton and boot and shoe industries. The percentage is also high on the railways; but the figure for insured workers does not show this, as most railway workers are not insured. I have therefore added figures for all railway employees. In many industries comparison is made impossible by the fact that some or all of the workers who are organised are enrolled in general labour Unions, the membership of which cannot be at all completely assigned to the various groups. The general labour Unions had together at the end of 1936 a male membership of about 900,000, including transport workers. Even if 600,000 of them could be assigned to occupations other than transport, they would represent only a very small percentage of organisation in the trades for which these Unions cater. Distribute these 600,000 among the 1,200,000 male metal workers over 16 who are not in Unions belonging specifically to the metal-working trades, the 1,000,000 similar workers in building and contracting, the further 1,000,000 in other manufacturing trades catered for by the general Unions, and the further half million or so in the public utility services, and they will not amount to one in six of the eligible male workers in these trades. And even this comparison leaves out altogether more than a million unorganised males in the distributive trades, upwards of 600,000 in

Notes to Table—contd

¹² Included under Transport and General Labour.

¹³ Excluding the general membership of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

¹⁴ Including manufacturing trades in which the corresponding column is marked '—'.

¹⁵ Included under 'Miscellaneous Occupations'.

¹⁶ Including non-manufacturing trades in which the corresponding column is marked '—'.

agriculture and gardening, and 170,000 in hotels and restaurants—to say nothing of another 300,000 or so male private domestic servants.

Among women the position is, of course, a great deal worse. Cotton operatives, teachers, and public employees are the only large, strongly organised groups of women workers, though among smaller groups women boot and shoe operatives have a remarkably high percentage of Trade Union members. There are 360,000 women in the metal and vehicle trades, 450,000 in the textile trades, excluding cotton, 375,000 in the clothing trades, 238,000 in the food trades, 870,000 in distribution and commerce, 270,000 in hotels and restaurants, 135,000 in laundries, and 165,000 in the printing and paper trades; but in all these groups the total Trade Union female membership, apart from the general labour Unions, was only a quarter of a million, out of nearly three millions. In these and all other groups, the female membership of the general labour Unions was under 60,000. Certainly in these trades, taken as a whole, not one woman in ten belongs to a Trade Union; and again about 1,500,000 private female domestic servants are being left out of account.

These figures, rough as they are, fully suffice to show the immense field open for Trade Union recruitment. In mining and manufacturing industries alone there are about 5,000,000 insured male workers over 16, and well under 2,500,000 male Trade Unionists, including those in the general labour Unions. Transport accounts for about a million and a quarter males over 16, and distribution for as many more; and in these two groups the Unions have perhaps a million male members. The services add about a million and a half males over 16, excluding domestic servants, and agriculture 650,000. In all, out of about twelve million employed males over 16, the Trade Unions at the end of 1936 had enrolled about four and a half millions. Out of about five million employed women, they had enrolled only 800,000, of whom about 350,000 were non-manual workers.

Manifestly, there is need for a crusade for the recruitment of new members to the Trade Unions. In the metal trades alone there are at least a million unorganised. There are nearly another million—practically all men—in the building and contracting group, and yet another million in the textile and clothing trades. Yet all these are industries in which Trade Unionism is, in some sections, admittedly strong. In distribution and commerce, where it is weak, there are two millions unorganised. In agriculture, depleted as it is, there are well over half a million outside any Union.

What special points could be chosen for a massed Trade Union attack? Clearly the motor trade, the miscellaneous metal trades and other mass-production trades which have been rapidly expanding in recent years, the food and clothing trades, building, especially in its less skilled branches, agriculture and distribution. Hotels and restaurants, and private domestic service, are harder to attack, because there is at present not even a nucleus of organisation. The initial campaigns should evidently be launched in trades where some beginnings of combination already exist. There will be much better chances of bringing in wholly unorganised groups if success can first be achieved in occupations in which Trade Unionism has some foothold and some basis of experience.

If a campaign is needed, how ought it to be set on foot? How far are the existing structure and organising policy of the Trade Unions appropriate to the task confronting the movement? And, where they are not appropriate, what can be done to amend them? It may help towards answering these questions if we glance first at the recent history of Trade Unionism in two countries in which it has recently made remarkable progress. These countries are France and the United States.

RECENT TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENTS IN FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES

THERE IS NO room in this book for a description of Trade Unionism as it exists in countries other than Great Britain. Wherever industrialism develops, Trade Unions grow and develop with it, unless they are successfully put down by force. We have seen that in the Fascist countries, Germany and Italy, where real Trade Unions have been suppressed, it has been deemed necessary to invent substitutes for them—the ‘Labour Front’ in Germany, and in Italy the so-called Fascist syndicates, which are attached to the ‘Corporations’ established for the regimentation of each sector of the national economic system. The primary purpose of these bodies is to keep the working-class in order, and, by forcibly attaching them to organisations completely subject to Fascist control, to prevent them from creating independent combinations of their own.

This method, of setting up ‘false’ Unions in order to prevent the workers from organising on democratic lines, is by no means new. It has been used in many different ways. In many European countries there were attempts from the middle of the nineteenth century to set up ‘Christian’ Trade Unions under Catholic control in order to combat the Social Democratic and independent Unions. There are still Christian Trade Union movements with a substantial membership in Belgium, Holland and Poland, and even to a smaller extent in France. These Unions, on condition of repudiating Socialism, have been allowed by their priestly leaders a certain limited freedom in defending

their members' interests. They have even occasionally conducted strikes, and made common cause, up to a point, with the independent Unions. But they have been based definitely on the doctrine that employers and workers have reciprocal rights and duties, and should live together in amicable terms. They have entirely repudiated the class-struggle, and any attempt to attack the capitalist system.

A closer resemblance to Fascist 'Trade Unionism' is to be found in the 'Unions'—"yellow Unions", the French call them—which have been from time to time organised by employers in order to prevent their employees from joining real Trade Unions. Bodies of this type are usually subsidised by the employers, and are thus enabled to offer substantial friendly benefits for a very low contribution. It is made a condition of membership that the workers shall not belong to any other society, and usually membership of the "yellow unions" is made a condition of employment. In the running of these 'Unions' foremen and supervisory workers usually play a leading part, under the employers' control; and the employers make with them 'fake' collective agreements, the terms of which they actually dictate. The so-called 'non-political' Unions which were set up in certain of the British coalfields after the strike of 1926, but have now been almost completely liquidated, approximated to this type; but it has not been common in Great Britain.

In the United States, on the other hand, this sort of 'fake' organisation, under the special form of 'company unionism', reached very large dimensions. In a number of industries each big capitalist concern set up its own 'company union', or sometimes a separate 'Union' for each of its plants. These bodies had no power or will of their own; but, helped by the big employers to provide cheap friendly benefits, they were successfully used in many cases to keep real Trade Unionism at bay. This was the easier as long as, by a legal perversion of the idea of freedom of contract, it was possible to obtain from the courts judicial 'injunctions' which made it punishable for

a Trade Union official to attempt to persuade workers to join a Union where the employer had compelled them to sign a contract promising not to do so, or involving membership of a 'company Union'.

During the past few years, 'company Unionism' in the United States has been largely smashed. In the early months of the 'New Deal' the employers met the threat of unionisation by mass-enrolments of their employees in company Unions, which had at one time a larger paper membership than all the other Labour Unions in the country. But the 'injunction' procedure was abolished by statute, and under the 'New Deal' it was presently made a legal offence for any employer to refuse his workers the right to organise, or to interfere with the form in which they might choose to organise. This law is still defied in practice by a number of the big capitalist concerns, and above all by Henry Ford; but it has been a very important factor in helping American Labour, in one big industry after another, to sweep the 'company Unions' away.

Until a year or two ago, the American Federation of Labor, with about three million members, occupied a position in the Trade Union movement analogous to that of the Trades Union Congress in Great Britain. It was the recognised central authority for the movement, though there were a few important Unions which did not belong to it. American Trade Unionism was, however, much weaker than Trade Unionism in Great Britain. It was powerful only in quite few industries, and for the most part only among skilled workers. Organisation in most cases followed rigid craft lines; and most Unions made no attempt at all to enrol the less skilled workers. In certain great industries—steel, automobiles, oil and rubber, for example—Trade Unionism hardly existed at all; and the craft Unions, despite their tiny membership, resolutely obstructed every effort to break down craft demarcations and to organise the great mass of less skilled workers on industrial lines.

There were, however, a few industries in which these deplorable conditions did not exist. The United Mine

Workers had been driven by the necessities of their calling to organise the coal mines in what was practically an industrial Union; and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and, to a certain extent, the Ladies' Garment Workers' Union had also created powerful societies on an inclusive basis. The leaders of these and a few other Unions began, under the impetus of the 'New Deal,' to challenge more and more directly the rigid craft policy of the A.F. of L. Realising the need for an industrial basis for organising the main body of workers in the mass-production industries, and the tremendous opportunity presented by the revival following on the world slump, these Unions, under the leadership of John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers and Sidney Hillman of the Clothing Workers, formed the Committee for Industrial Organisation and set out to build up new, independent industrial Unions in the steel, rubber, oil, lumber, automobile and other industries which the A.F. of L. had signally failed to organise.

This campaign, coinciding in time with the outlawry of the 'company Unions' under the 'New Deal,' as well as with a recovery in trade which involved a sharp rise in prices, met with very great success. In the early months of 1937 the C.I.O. Unions won a series of resounding victories, and secured 'recognition' and wage advances from a number of the big steel and automobile concerns, which had previously been among the bitterest opponents of Trade Unionism.

Throughout this campaign, the Unions which formed the C.I.O. maintained their affiliations to the A.F. of L., and sought to enlist its support. But the A.F. of L. leaders remained resolutely hostile. The craft Unions were ready enough to demand concessions for their own members; and they secured many concessions simultaneously with the C.I.O.'s campaign. But they would not lift a finger to help with the organisation of less skilled workers on a basis which seemed to threaten their craft monopoly; and more than once A.F. of L. craftsmen blacklegged openly upon C.I.O. strikers. The A.F. of L. would not admit to

affiliation the new industrial Unions set up by the C.I.O.; and presently, after calling repeatedly upon the C.I.O. to cease its activities, it suspended from membership all the Unions which were associated with it.

Thus, at a time when American Trade Unionism had won unprecedented successes and had more than doubled its membership in a couple of years, there was a bitter internecine feud between the rival sections. It was plain to all competent observers that the big employers, having been compelled to give way under the pressure of the C.I.O.'s first onslaughts, were only awaiting the first opportunity to strike back, and withdraw the concessions they had made. It was plain that American Labour had a wonderful opportunity if only it could work as a united force, but was in serious danger of defeat if one section sided with the employers against the other. In the autumn of 1937 negotiations were opened between the leaders of the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. The C.I.O. Unions offered to return to the A.F. of L. if they were given freedom to organise on industrial lines, and if the new Unions they had set up were admitted to affiliation. But the negotiations broke down in face of the A.F. of L.'s insistence on the craft basis of organisation; and early in 1938 the A.F. of L. leaders went to the length of actually expelling the United Mine Workers and certain other C.I.O. Unions.

Thus matters stand as these words are being written. It is possible that there may still be an accommodation; but whether or no, it has been clearly demonstrated that the industrial Union provides the only possible basis for a successful attempt to bring the main body of semi-skilled machine workers in the mass-production industries into the Trade Union movement. Craft Unionism simply fails to touch them: what is needed is a Union broad enough to enrol the whole body of workers attached to a particular plant, irrespective of the different processes upon which they are engaged. Nothing except a Union of this comprehensive type could have swept the 'company Unions'

away, or broken the big employers' resistance to recognition and collective bargaining. And only the maintenance of the 'New Unionism' can prevent American Big Business from achieving its revenge at the first favourable opportunity.

The mass-production industries do not play so large a part in British industry as they do in the United States. But here too they are of great and rapidly growing importance; and existing Trade Union methods have shown in many cases their inadequacy to break the employers' resistance. As long as the general labour Unions and craft Unions act practically without co-ordination in their attempts to organise these industries, success is bound to be difficult. Fortunately, British craft Unionism has not shown itself nearly so hidebound and reactionary, so far, as the craft Unionism of the A.F. of L.; and in Great Britain the gulf between skilled workers' and less skilled workers' Unions is a good deal less wide. But what is required is not merely mutual toleration, but active and positive co-operation, if Trade Unionism is not actually to lose ground as the older industries decline, and new mass-production industries, using a much smaller proportion of skilled workers, take their place. The C.I.O. experience is not without morals for British Trade Unionism—morals which the British as well as the American Trade Unions would do well to take speedily to heart.

In another country, France, Trade Unionism has been passing, during the last few years, through a remarkable process of regeneration. Only two years ago the French Trade Union movement was still very weak, and impotent in many industries because of its division into two contending factions. In 1936 the independent *Confédération Générale du Travail* had about 1,300,000 members, and its Communist rival, the *Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire*, about 300,000. Thereafter, the same pressure from below as created in politics the *Front Populaire* compelled the rival Trade Union centres to reunite. Within a few months the membership of the combined body had risen

from about a million and a half to well over five millions—a remarkable total as compared with the British in view of the smaller degree of industrialisation and the smaller total population of France. The reunited C.G.T. had won impressive victories in almost every industry. There had been great and successful strikes—often waged by the method of peaceful occupation of the establishments in order to prevent blacklegging—not only in one industry after another, but also in the big Paris shops and in a host of occupations hitherto almost untouched by Trade Unionism. Collective agreements had been won from many employers' associations which had refused any form of recognition; and these agreements often included, besides rises in wages and the introduction of the forty-hour working week, the establishment of control over the employers' right of dismissal and the recognition of shop stewards and works committees to supervise their execution.

In the course of this crusade, the building and wood-working Trade Unions rose from 65,000 members to 540,000, the metal workers from 50,000 to 775,000, the textile workers from 47,000 to over 300,000, and the Unions in the food trades from 15,000 to about 300,000. Clerks and shop assistants, practically unorganised till then, achieved a Trade Union membership of 285,000. Other Unions recorded only less dramatic advances. In France, where rigid craft unionism had relatively little strength, there was no such feud concerning the basis of organisation as in the United States; and the reunited movement was for the most part untroubled by inter-union disputes. But there, as in America, the big employers, compelled to give way before the impetus of the mass-movement, cherish the hope of revenge. For the past year they have been doing their best by infringement of the agreements they were compelled to make, and by selective dismissals of 'agitators', to break down the new régime; and at the same time they have made every endeavour, by sowing dissension among the Radicals, to compass the destruction of the *Front Populaire*. The French Trade Union victories

are not yet securely assured; but they have afforded an impressive demonstration of the power of Trade Unionism, under effective leadership, to launch a mass-crusade, and to make an immediate and compelling appeal to millions of workers who had never previously felt any sufficient impulsion to join a Trade Union.

The French example, as well as the American, has its morals for the British Trade Unions. We are too apt to assume that the only possible method of extending Trade Union influence is by a process of slow and steady growth along the traditional lines. But this is not the way in which British Trade Unionism has won in the past its most impressive and enduring victories. In the eighteen-seventies, when Joseph Arch organised the agricultural labourers and the engineers and shipbuilders won the nine-hour day by their great unofficial movement beginning on the North-East Coast, the conservative leaders of the older Unions were mostly surprised and even hostile. Again in 1889, when the London dockers and gasworkers, with practically no organisation, won their famous victories, the older leaders mostly expressed only a profound disbelief in the possibility of effective Trade Union action except by bodies of skilled craftsmen able to pay high contributions and to create narrow monopolies of labour within their respective trades. Trade Union leadership is apt to be remarkably conservative—until something happens to stir up the mass of ordinary, rank-and-file workers into revolt, and even then it is apt to remain aloof and sceptical until victory has been actually achieved. Yet it is only by such mass-movements from below that Trade Unionism has won its present degree of power and recognition; and it is plausible to argue that only a new mass-movement of the same character will enable it to conquer the newer, mass-production industries, which it seems unable to reach by the traditional methods of approach.

TWO VIEWS OF TRADE UNIONISM

THERE IS A perpetual conflict inside the Trade Union movement between two rival conceptions of its purpose. On the one side are those who regard the industrial organisation of the workers as the instinctive expression of the class-struggle which is inherent in the wage relationship between capitalist and labourer, and can be transcended only by the supersession of capitalism itself. The workers who take this view are class-conscious proletarians, holding Socialist (or in some countries Anarchist or Syndicalist) opinions, and seeking to weld the whole working class together into a solid force for the overthrow of capitalism. For them, Trade Unionism is essentially a fighting movement, resting on a class basis; and any agreements which the workers may make with their employers are but truces, temporary intervals in a war which can end only with the final victory of the working class.

As against this idea of Trade Unionism must be set another, which exists especially among skilled workers following a definite craft and among professional and other non-manual workers who enjoy some superiority of status or income. This second idea of Trade Unionism is that it exists in order to protect and advance the interests of a defined group of workers who possess some special skill or other mark of distinction from the general mass of labour, so that they can hope by a close combination of those who possess this special qualification to secure better terms of employment and a higher status than would be possible if each man acted alone. The aim of those who hold this view is to create for themselves a limited monopoly of

labour, in order to improve its price, just as capitalists endeavour by combination to exact a monopoly profit. There is in this type of Trade Unionism no set intention to change the economic system, but only a will to make it work better from the standpoint of the particular group. Nor is there any desire to build up a solid combination of the whole working class; for it is clearly impossible for all of them to exact special privileges. If there is to be exploitation, there must be persons left to exploit.

In practice no Trade Union accepts completely either of these points of view. Combinations approaching very near to the second idea are to be found amongst certain classes of professional men—doctors, lawyers, and so on—but only by a straining of the term can bodies of this sort be regarded as Trade Unions. Moreover, the professional bodies, even when their action is most narrowly monopolistic, usually include among their objects the maintenance of certain standards of ‘professional conduct’ which have their good as well as their bad side.

Nevertheless, many Trade Unions, even among manual workers, have in them a strong monopolistic strain. How indeed could it be otherwise? A body of skilled craftsmen, such as engine-drivers, or patternmakers, or plumbers, or carpenters, has certain very important immediate common interests. Its members know that if too many apprentices are taken into their trade, or if a section of its work is transferred to some other craft or to less skilled workers, the probable outcome is an increased risk of unemployment for themselves, and a greater difficulty in maintaining their standard wages and conditions. They know that the degree of unpleasantness and discomfort which their work involves is greatly affected by their success or failure in enforcing by united action certain standards of employment, which they seek to establish as ‘customs of the trade’. They know that, if they act together, their skill possesses a high degree of indispensability, whereas each of them can, as a rule, be easily replaced if he attempts to act alone.

Inevitably it is very much easier to build up Trade Unions among skilled workers who have immediate common interests of this sort than it is to organise the general mass of less skilled labour. For the less skilled workers, even if they act together in considerable numbers, can be much more easily replaced; and it is impossible for them to make their organisations really blackleg-proof unless they can organise the entire working class. Consequently, the skilled craftsmen are the first to succeed in establishing strong and stable Trade Unions—indeed, the very word ‘Trade Union’ begins by meaning a Union of workers following a recognised trade. Thus, craft Unions, being the first in the field, or at any rate the first to establish their position securely, set their impress upon Trade Unionism as a whole, and stand formidably in the way of attempts to convert the movement into an instrument of revolutionary class action.

There are, however, certain large groups of workers who, driven imperatively to organise by the conditions under which they work, are prevented from creating craft Unions of the familiar monopolistic type. Most prominent among these groups are the miners, among whom the skilled and the unskilled cannot easily be marked off into distinct classes, so as to enable the skilled men to build up monopolistic combinations apart from the main body. Even among the miners, combinations of this type have existed in the past, and could exist today if the ‘butty’ or ‘contract’ system were allowed to regain its hold. But for the most part the miners have been compelled to act solidly together, through Unions seeking to include all grades, because they have wanted concessions, especially in respect of safety and working conditions, such as could be secured only by united pressure upon the State as well as the employers. This gives mining Trade Unionism a natural tendency towards organisation on an ‘industrial’ basis; and the continual pressure upon the State for mines legislation has also helped the miners’ Unions to think politically, and has thus made them readier converts than most workers to Socialist notions.

Any Trade Union, however, whether it be a craft Union or an industrial Union or a general Union bringing together workers of many different types, is compelled so to act as to look after the immediate interests of its members. However socialistic the opinions of its leaders may be, they have, as long as capitalism exists and cannot be immediately overthrown, to make the best terms they can with capitalist employers. Any Union which fails to make the best bargains it can under capitalism will soon lose its members.

But there may be an inconsistency between making the best of capitalism and seeking its overthrow. In particular, a limited body of skilled workers, or even a whole industry, may be able to strike a more favourable bargain for the time being if it is prepared to bind itself not to make trouble and not to go to the assistance of other groups. Trade Union leaders are continually finding that the employers will make concessions, provided that they are prepared to pledge themselves not to ask for more for so many months or years, not to countenance any stoppage of work while the agreement lasts, and to have nothing to do with sympathetic strikes. It may pay a group of employers very well to purchase at a price the 'loyalty' of the key men on whom the industry depends, or even to secure at a price the smooth running of an entire industry for a period of years.

The class-conscious revolutionary, bent on the overthrow of capitalism, may say that it does not matter much what wages and conditions are granted under capitalism, and that Trade Union policy should always be governed by the necessity of advancing the social revolution. But no one who has an actual Union to lead can act on such an opinion. A Trade Union leader could not act on it even if he believed that capitalism was fast approaching its final crisis, and that the law of increasing misery held the working class as a whole inexorably in its grip. For the fact would remain that he could for the moment make either a worse or a better bargain; and if he made a

worse one, he would risk losing his job or seeing his Union melt away.

This difficulty, however, has another aspect. For while the employers are often ready to buy off, at a price, a body of skilled workers who threaten to be troublesome, they are unlikely, to be ready to offer anything of substance unless they are afraid of trouble. If a Trade Union gets into such peaceable habits of conciliation that the employers cease to be afraid of it, its bargaining power is gone. It must have teeth, and be prepared to bite in the last resort, even if its leaders and members would much sooner make a bargain without actual conflict. It is, however, not easy to preserve a fighting spirit among a body of workers unless they are sometimes given an actual chance of using it. That is why, even for the narrowest groups of skilled craftsmen, industrial pacifism does not pay in the end. If they never do make trouble, they lose the power to make it, and therewith forfeit the employers' respect.

But if the fighting spirit is given its head, even among the most monopolistic craft groups, it is apt to lead to the emergence of a wider class attitude. The craftsmen are not bargaining automata, but men with human sympathies and some sort of fellow-feeling for the less-skilled workers who are worse exploited than they. Strikes are great creators of solidarity and class-spirit between skilled and less-skilled workers, and between workers in different trades and industries. Black-legging upon a fellow-worker in any trade is very widely felt to be an unforgivable sin.

The Trade Union movement thus makes in practice its compromise between the rival notions of its purpose. Moreover, the terms of this compromise vary from time to time. In periods of depression, solidarity tends to ebb. The craft Unions are then intent on avoiding conflicts and making the best terms they can by negotiation until better times return. At the other extreme, a section of the unemployed workers, aided by the class-conscious

socialistic minority, turns towards a more revolutionary attitude as a reaction from its sufferings; and a conflict develops between these two groups. The moderates then denounce the extremists for hampering their attempts to make the best terms they can secure; and the Left denounces the moderates as betrayers of the working-class cause.

On the other hand, in periods of boom every section gets into action with demands for better wages and conditions. This brings them all together in opposition to the employers, and thrusts their internal conflicts into the background. At least, this *tends* to happen. But when during the period of depression the official leadership has got into habits of industrial pacifism and has lost the power to conduct a fighting policy, it may not actually happen until there has been time for the reactionary leaders to be thrust aside, or at the least to be given so severe a shock as to wake them up. And, of course, if the boom is short-lived, this process may take too long, and the workers may lose their chance and find themselves face to face with a renewed slump before any substantial gains have been secured.

At the present moment British Trade Unionism is in serious danger of missing its chance. As I write, a boom has been in full swing; but very little attempt has been made to take advantage of it. Now, assuredly, is the time both for the organised workers to win advances by militant action and for the movement to bring effectively within its ranks the mass of unorganised workers in the rapidly-developing new industries and services. But the old leaders only found, in the recent boom, a new excuse for inaction. Every sign of Trade Union militancy can now be attributed to the machinations of a handful of Communists, who have somehow found the art of being in a hundred places at once, and in whom it is regarded as a crime to induce non-Unionists to join a Trade Union, or to suggest to the workers that they had better act promptly, while profits are high, instead of staying quiet until the precarious chance

passes away. In 1934 the Trades Union Congress made a great affair of celebrating the centenary of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. If George Loveless and his friends got into trouble with the police today, they would probably be told that they were a pack of Communist agitators, who deserved all they got.

APPENDIX
A SUMMARY GUIDE TO TRADE
UNIONISM

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A SUMMARY GUIDE TO TRADE UNIONISM

All figures in this summary, except where a date is mentioned, are for 1937. 'T.U.C.' means affiliated to the Trades Union Congress; L.P. to the national Labour Party; and G.F.T.U. to the General Federation of Trade Unions.

Group I. MINING AND QUARRYING

T.U.C., 544,705 members, 8 societies. L.P. 401,110 members, 2 societies.

This group is dominated by the *Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain* (T.U.C., 518,425, L.P. 400,000), a federation of district miners' Unions of widely varying size in Scotland, S. Wales, N. Wales, Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire, Notts., Derby, Leicester, Midlands (Midland Federation, including, Stafford, Warwick, Cannock Chase, etc), Somerset, Forest of Dean, Bristol and Kent. The largest district bodies are in Yorkshire, Durham and South Wales. The only other considerable society in the T.U.C. is the *General Federation of Firemen's and Deputies' Associations* (T.U.C. 10,000), also made up of local societies in the various coalfields. The North Wales Quarrymen's Union (T.U.C. 8,200), included in this group, is now a section, with some autonomy, of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

After the dispute of 1926 attempts were made in some areas to set up 'non-political' miners' Unions, which were encouraged by the owners. These made no headway except in Nottinghamshire and S. Wales. The Notts.

Miners' 'Industrial Union' was amalgamated with the Notts. Miners' Association in 1937, and the S. Wales Miners' Industrial Union was by 1938 confined to a single colliery and in imminent danger of disappearance.

Group II. RAILWAYS

T.U.C. 448,779 members, 3 societies. *L.P.* 275,954 members, 3 societies.

The three railway Unions, which work together and use common negotiating machinery, are all affiliated to both the T.U.C. and the Labour Party. The *National Union of Railwaymen* (T.U.C. 337,848, L.P. 214,919) is in theory open to all railway employees, but in fact does not attempt to organise clerical or supervisory workers, except those promoted from the manual grades. The *Railway Clerks' Association* (T.U.C. 60,931, L.P. 49,000) includes stationmasters and other supervisory workers, as well as clerks. The *Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen* (T.U.C. 50,000, L.P. 12,035) includes in practice most of the drivers and firemen, though some are in the N.U.R., and divides the engine cleaners with the N.U.R.

Outside all three railway Unions are a large proportion of the craftsmen in the railway engine and carriage shops, and also some of the less skilled shopmen. Many of the craftsmen belong to craft Unions of engineers, boilermakers, woodworkers, etc. There is separate negotiating machinery for the shopmen, in which the N.U.R. participates jointly with the craft Unions. Similarly, workers in road transport employed by the railway companies are partly in the N.U.R. and partly in the Transport and General Workers' Union; and the two bodies act together in dealing with road transport conditions.

Group III. TRANSPORT WORKERS

T.U.C. 605,893 members, 9 societies. *L.P.* 321,676 members, 3 societies.

The leading Union in this group is the *Transport and General Workers' Union* (T.U.C. 523,300, L.P. 301,000), which organises not only dock workers and road transport workers of all types, but also a wide range of general workers in many industries, including flour-milling, tinplate-making, chemicals, and many others. It has also a section for clerical and supervisory workers. Outside the T. and G.W.U. are several localised Unions of road and waterside workers—*United Road Transport Workers' Association* (Manchester—T.U.C. 10,000), *Liverpool Carters' and Motormen's Union* (T.U.C. 8,000), *Scottish Transport Workers* (a few thousands), *Cardiff, etc., Coal Trimmers' Union* (T.U.C. 1,137). A section of the busmen broke away in 1938, after the dispute in London, and attempted to organise a separate Passenger Transport Union, but it is not yet possible to tell whether this body will last. The T. and G.W.U. does not in practice organise seamen, who are in the *National Union of Seamen* (T.U.C. 50,000, L.P. 19,984) or ships' officers, who are in the *Navigators' and Engineer Officers' Union* (T.U.C. 9,456). Two local Unions of *Steam Trawler Engineers* (Humber 1,400 and Grimsby 600) and the *Association of Wireless and Cable Telegraphists* (T.U.C. 2,000) completed the membership of the T.U.C. group in 1937; but the Humber Union has since joined the T. and G.W.U.

The T. and G.W.U. has taken over the *Scottish Farm Servants' Union*, and has also an agricultural section in England. It has also taken over the *N. Wales Quarrymen* (see Group I).

Group IV. SHIPBUILDING

T.U.C. 77,541 members, 4 societies. L.P. 15,646 members, 2 societies.

This group has been seriously depleted by the contraction of the industry. The leading Society is the *United Society of Boilermakers and Iron and Steel Shipbuilders* (T.U.C. 50,750, L.P. 14,864). Others are the *Shipconstructors'*

and Shipwrights' Association (T.U.C. 18,561), the *Associated Blacksmiths' Society* (T.U.C. 7,873) and the *Barge Builders' Trade Union* (T.U.C. 357). Labourers in the shipyards are largely organised in the National Union of General and Municipal Workers.

Group V. ENGINEERING

T.U.C. 449,222 members, 27 societies. *L.P.* 125,575 members, 12 societies.

The principal body is the *Amalgamated Engineering Union* (T.U.C. 248,209, L.P. 70,021), which consists mainly of skilled fitters, turners, smiths, brassfinishers, machinists, etc., though it also enrols less skilled workers. It is the result of a post-war amalgamation of a considerable number of craft Unions. Next in size are the *Electrical Trades Union* (T.U.C. 48,000, L.P. 11,000) and the *National Union of Foundry Workers* (T.U.C. 25,912, L.P. 10,486). Other craft Unions of importance are the *National Union of Vehicle Builders* (T.U.C. 23,982, L.P. 7,980), the *United Patternmakers' Association* (T.U.C. 10,660, L.P. 4,570), the *National Society of Brass and Metal Mechanics* (T.U.C. 15,000, L.P. 8,626). The *Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen* (T.U.C. 13,950) has succeeded in creating a strong Union of the non-manual workers in the drawing offices, and is now fully recognised by the employers. The *National Union of Enginemen* (T.U.C. 23,066), though it belongs to the T.U.C. engineering group, includes operators of stationary engines and cranes in a number of industries. The numerous small Unions in the group are largely confined to small, highly specialised mechanical trades; and there are a considerable number of very small similar societies outside the T.U.C.

Most of the more important Unions in this and the preceding group, except the A.E.U., are federated in the *Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Trades Unions*, which exists for discussing matters common to the industries as a whole. It includes also most of the Woodworking

Societies and the general labour Unions, which have a considerable membership among the less skilled workers in the shipyards and engineering shops. Women workers, who have increased greatly in the lighter engineering trades, are eligible for the general labour Unions, but remain in fact largely unorganised, as do many of the male workers in motor-car manufacture and other growing branches of light engineering.

Group VI. METAL MANUFACTURE AND MINOR METAL TRADES

T.U.C. 119,178 members, 19 societies. *L.P.* 42,914 members, 6 societies.

This group includes, together with the iron and steel industry, a very miscellaneous collection of minor metal trades. In the iron and steel sections the main body is the *Iron and Steel Trades Confederation* (T.U.C. 69,000, L.P. 26,120), now virtually a single Union, based on an amalgamation of all the important bodies in the industry except the *National Union of Blastfurnacemen* (T.U.C. 13,620, L.P. 8,062). The only other large society is the *National Union of Sheet Metal Workers and Braziers* (T.U.C. 15,100, L.P. 8,000). In addition to the smaller bodies in the T.U.C. group there are a number of unaffiliated small Unions, some of which belong to the General Federation of Trade Unions. Of the remaining bodies in the T.U.C. the most important are the *Amalgamated Society of Wire-drawers* (T.U.C. 5,132), the *National Union of Gold, Silver and Allied Trades* (T.U.C. 3,589, L.P. 686), and a number of small Unions in the Sheffield cutlery trades and the minor metal trades of the Black Country.

Group VII. BUILDING, WOODWORKING AND FURNISHING

T.U.C. 326,619 members, 18 societies. *L.P.* 68,870 members, 8 societies.

The largest Union in this group is the *Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers* (T.U.C. 120,684, L.P. 41,900). This has many members in the shipyards and in the engineering industry, as well as in building and cabinet-making. Next in size is the *Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers* (T.U.C. 55,000, L.P. 14,000), the Union of the 'trowel trades'—bricklayers and masons. The other leading Unions in the building industry are the *National Amalgamated Society of Operative House and Ship Painters and Decorators* (T.U.C. 40,122, L.P. 3,116), the *Plumbers, Glaziers and Domestic Engineers* (T.U.C. 24,163), the *National Association of Operative Plasterers* (T.U.C. 13,165, L.P. 3,202), and the *National Builders' Labourers' and Constructional Workers' Society* (T.U.C. 9,100). In addition, the group includes the *National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association* (T.U.C. 17,830, L.P. 1,920), the *Amalgamated Society of Woodcutting Machinists* (T.U.C. 15,144), and the *Amalgamated Union of Upholsterers* (T.U.C. 7,550, L.P. 1,106), as well as a number of smaller bodies.

The principal building Unions are federated in the *National Federation of Building Trades Operatives*, which performs negotiating functions on behalf of the industry as a whole. There are a good many small Unions outside the T.U.C. and the Labour Party, and also outside the N.F.B.T.O. A number of these belong to the General Federation of Trade Unions; but their aggregate membership is very small. In a number of the building trades there are separate Unions in Scotland.

Group VIII. PRINTING AND PAPER

T.U.C. 168,793 members, 13 societies. *L.P.* 56,701 members, 5 societies.

These industries are strongly organised on craft lines. The compositors and allied workers are in the *London Society of Compositors* (T.U.C. 14,130, L.P. 8,810), the *Typographical Association*, the corresponding body for the rest of England, (T.U.C. 36,171, L.P. 19,902), and the

Scottish Typographical Association (T.U.C. 7,000). The S.T.A. includes less skilled workers as well as craftsmen. The main body of the less skilled workers is organised in the *National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants* (T.U.C. 24,548, L.P. 21,967), which is very strong in London, and the *National Union of Printing, Bookbinding and Paper Workers* (T.U.C. 59,773), the largest Union in the industry, including the bookbinding and paper workers as well as less skilled printing workers. Other craft bodies include the *National Society of Electrotypers and Stereotypers* (T.U.C. 3,823, L.P. 2,372), the *Amalgamated Society of Lithographic Printers* (T.U.C. 7,430), the *Society of Lithographic Artists* (T.U.C. 6,784, L.P. 3,650), the *Printing Machine Managers' Trade Society* (T.U.C. 4,241), and several smaller bodies, such as the *Association of Correctors of the Press* (T.U.C. 1,527). All the leading Societies are united in the *Printing and Kindred Trades Federation*, which undertakes negotiations on general issues, such as hours of labour, affecting the industry as a whole.

Group IX. COTTON

- *T.U.C. 185,385 members, 7 societies. L.P. 129, 501 members, 7 societies.*

The cotton Unions have been severely hit by the prolonged depression and their membership has fallen heavily. There are three main sections—preparing, spinning and manufacturing. The first is represented by the *Amalgamated Association of Card, Blowing and Ring Room Operatives* (T.U.C. 44,107, L.P. 28,115), which also includes ring spinners, and has a largely female membership (35,286). The *Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners and Twiners* (T.U.C. 32,232, L.P. 12,395) is, on the other hand, exclusively male. In the manufacturing section the largest body is the *Amalgamated Weavers' Association* (T.U.C. 93,691, L.P. 81,056), which has also a preponderantly female membership (74,953). The remaining bodies of importance are the *General Union of Associations of Loom*

Overlookers (T.U.C. 4,965, L.P. 3,160), the *Amalgamated Association of Beamers, Twisters and Drawers* (T.U.C. 4,306, L.P. 2,772), and the *Amalgamated Textile Warehousemen* (T.U.C. 6,000, L.P. 1,777). The 'Amalgamations' in the cotton trades are made up of local societies, which retain considerable autonomy, especially in respect of friendly benefits. The societies in the manufacturing section are federated in the *Northern Counties Textile Trades Federation*, and in corresponding local Federations. For purposes, chiefly political, affecting the whole industry, nearly all the Unions are federated in the *United Textile Factory Workers' Association*, which is affiliated to the Labour Party as a unit, but not to the T.U.C. The workers in the dyeing and finishing trades, as a result of recent amalgamations, are organised together with the woollen operatives in the *National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers*, which appears in the next group.

Group X. TEXTILES OTHER THAN COTTON

T.U.C. 104,551 members, 14 societies. *L.P.* 41,833 members, 6 societies.

This group is dominated by the *National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers* (T.U.C. 78,470, L.P. 38,456), the result of an amalgamation, completed in 1937, between the two big Unions of dyers and bleachers and the *National Union of Textile Workers*, the principal society in the woollen and worsted trades. The remaining Unions are all small, the largest being the *Dundee and District Union of Jute and Flax Workers* (T.U.C. 8,075), and the *Power Loom Carpet Weavers' Association* (T.U.C. 4,150, L.P. 2,100). There are two Unions of lace-workers—the *British Lace Operatives' Federation* (T.U.C. 2,132) and the *Amalgamated Society of Operative Lace Makers* (T.U.C. 1,440). To the woollen and worsted trades belong the *Managers' and Overlookers' Society* (T.U.C. 1,502, L.P. 377), the *National Wool Sorters' Society* (T.U.C. 2,000, L.P. 200), the *Saddleworth Weavers' and Woollen Textile Workers' Association* (T.U.C.

1,390), the *Yorkshire Warptwisters' Society* (T.U.C. 1,080), and several smaller bodies. The group also includes the *United Society of Engravers* (T.U.C. 1,840), engaged in calico printing.

A considerable number of small societies belonging to this group are not affiliated to the T.U.C., but belong to the General Federation of Trade Unions. The largest of these are the *Scottish Lace Textile Workers' Union* (2,250), and the *National Association of Silk Workers* (2,666). A substantial number of workers in the miscellaneous textile trades, especially artificial silk, are in the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, and some in the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Group XI. CLOTHING

T.U.C. 91,792 members, 8 societies. *L.P.* 20,017 members, 3 societies.

The *National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers* (T.U.C. 65,409, L.P. 16,024) includes the majority of the members of this group. This union has now absorbed nearly all the tailoring societies, except the *Waterproof Garment Workers' Trade Union* (T.U.C. 2,221, L.P. 1,794) and the *United Ladies' Tailors' Trade Union* (G.F.T.U. 1,466), which is not affiliated to the T.U.C. The group includes in addition the *Leicester and Leicestershire Amalgamated Hosiery Union* (T.U.C. 5,100), the *Nottingham and District Hosiery Workers' Society* (T.U.C. 4,000), the *Hinckley and District Hosiery Union* (T.U.C. 2,800). Some smaller hosiery Unions belong to the G.F.T.U., but not to the T.U.C. Finally, there are two hatters' societies—the *Amalgamated Society of Journeymen Felt Hatters* (T.U.C. 3,840, L.P. 2,199) and the *Amalgamated Felt Hat Trimmers' Association* (T.U.C. 3,622).

Group XII. LEATHER AND BOOT AND SHOE

T.U.C. 101,995 members, 6 societies. *L.P.* 47,799 members, 1 society.

The only large Union here is the *National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives* (T.U.C. 84,198, L.P. 47,779). Outside this body are the *Rossendale Union of Boot, Shoe and Slipper Operatives* (T.U.C. 8,891) and the *Amalgamated Society of Boot and Shoe Makers* (T.U.C. 1,200). The rest of the group is made up of the *Amalgamated Society of Leather Workers* (T.U.C. 4,200), the *National Union of Leather Workers* (T.U.C. 2,087) and the *National Union of Glovers* (G.F.T.U., 1,250).

Group XIII. GLASS, POTTERY, CHEMICALS, FOOD,
DRINK, TOBACCO, BRUSHMAKING AND DISTRIBUTION

(a) *Glass, Pottery, Chemicals, Brushmaking—*

T.U.C. 21,362 members, 7 societies. L.P. 9,119 members,
3 societies.

(b) *Food, Drink, Tobacco—*

T.U.C. 27,277 members, 6 societies. L.P. 13,080 members,
2 societies.

(c) *Distribution—*

T.U.C. 226,833 members, 5 societies. L.P. 176,935 members,
2 societies.

Total—

T.U.C. 275,472 members, 18 societies. L.P. 199,134 members,
7 societies.

It has seemed best to break up this highly miscellaneous group. In the first section the leading body is the *National Society of Pottery Workers* (T.U.C. 11,532, L.P. 8,350). There are four small societies of glass workers, with an aggregate T.U.C. membership of 1,610. The two remaining bodies are the *National League of the Blind* (T.U.C. 5,629, L.P. 469), mainly brushmakers, and the *National Society of Brushmakers* (T.U.C. 2,600). Chemical workers are mainly in the general labour Unions.

In the second section, the largest Union is the *Amalgamated Union of Bakers and Confectioners* (T.U.C. 13,000,

L.P. 8,000). The *Scottish Union of Bakers and Confectioners* (T.U.C. 6,780, L.P. 5,080) is separate. The *Journeyman Butchers' Federation* (T.U.C. 4,699) is the only other important Union in the food trades, as workers in the biscuit and sugar trades and flour millers are organised in the general labour Unions. The *Cigar and Tobacco Workers' Union* (T.U.C. 2,200) and a small society of cigarette workers complete this section; but here, again, many workers are in the general Unions.

The third section is much more important. It is headed by the *National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers* (T.U.C. 158,103, L.P. 137,000) which has its nucleus of strength among Co-operative employees, and the *National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks* (T.U.C. 59,734, L.P. 39,935). These have both been growing rapidly, and have secured recognition of collective bargaining rights over a widening field. The remaining societies are the *National Union of Co-operative Officials* (T.U.C. 5,612), the *Retail Book, Stationery and Allied Trades Employees' Association* (T.U.C. 2,864), and the *National Union of Commercial Travellers* (T.U.C. 520)—the tiny rival of the Commercial Travellers' Association, which is not regarded as a Trade Union.

Group XIV. AGRICULTURE

T.U.C. 32,000 members, 1 society. *L.P.* 20,000 members, 1 society.

This group consists of the *National Union of Agricultural Workers* (T.U.C. 32,000, L.P. 20,000). The Scottish Farm Servants' Union is now a section of the Transport and General Workers' Union, which has also an agricultural section in England and Wales.

Group XV. PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

T.U.C. 60,429 members, 5 societies. *L.P.* 36,529 members, 3 societies.

State employees having been forbidden by the Trade Union Act of 1927 to belong to either the T.U.C. or the Labour Party, this group now consists entirely of employees of local authorities. The largest body is the *National Union of Public Employees* (T.U.C. 30,271, L.P. 12,807)—mainly manual workers. The others are the *Mental Hospital and Institutional Workers' Union* (T.U.C. 15,026, L.P. 3,000), the *National Union of County Officers* (T.U.C. 10,930), the *Fire Brigades' Union* (T.U.C. 2,500, L.P. 622), and the *Women Public Health Officers' Association* (T.U.C. 1,705). The *National Association of Local Government Officers* (about 100,000) is the main organisation catering for local government employees in the non-manual grades. It is not strictly a Trade Union, and is not affiliated to either the T.U.C. or the Labour Party; but in 1937 the T.U.C. set up a Local Government Advisory Committee, on which N.A.L.G.O. is represented together with the T.U.C. Unions organising local government employees. These include the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, which is the principal Union organising manual workers employed by local authorities, as well as the Transport and General Workers' Union and the bodies included in the Public Employees' Group. The T.U.C. is also endeavouring to establish collaborative relations with other organisations, such as the British Medical Association, in the sphere of the public health services.

Group XVI. NON-MANUAL WORKERS

T.U.C. 74,310 members, 9 societies. *L.P.* 9,177 members, 3 societies.

This group is made up of four elements—clerks, insurance workers, amusement workers and doctors. The largest body is the *National Federation of Insurance Workers* (T.U.C. 22,500). One constituent of this Federation only is in the Labour Party—the *Prudential Staff Union* (L.P. 4,000). A rival body, favouring nationalisation of insurance, is the *National Amalgamated Union of Life Assurance Workers* (T.U.C. 7,000,

L.P. 3,737), which organises the staffs of a number of friendly and collecting societies and other bodies engaged in industrial assurance. The *Guild of Insurance Officials* (T.U.C. 16,382), a recent recruit to Congress, organises the employees of the insurance companies, as distinct from industrial assurance.

In the clerical section are the *National Union of Clerks and Administrative Workers* (T.U.C. 9,936, L.P. 1,440) and the *Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries* (T.U.C. 2,100), both organising general clerical workers; but it must be remembered that many clerical workers are enrolled in other bodies, such as the Railway Clerks' Association (Group II), the societies of Civil Servants and other public employees, and the clerical sections of such bodies as the Transport and General Workers' Union and the Shop Assistants' Union. There are also other societies of clerical workers not affiliated to the T.U.C.—notably the *Bank Officers' Guild* and the *Scottish Bankers' Association*.

The amusement trades are represented in the T.U.C. by three Unions—the *National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees* (T.U.C. 8,421), the *Film Artistes' Association* (T.U.C. 1,215), and the *Cine-Technicians' Association* (T.U.C. 1,122). Outside Congress are the *Actors' Equity* (4,750) and the *Musicians' Union*, which both maintain close relations with the London Trades Council, and the Variety Artistes' Federation.

Finally, the group includes the *Medical Practitioners' Union* (T.U.C. 5,434), which draws its main strength from medical men employed by public bodies and institutions, and follows a more definitely Trade Union policy than the much larger *British Medical Association*, with which the T.U.C. collaborates in matters of public health, though it is not an affiliated body.

Group XVII. GENERAL WORKERS

T.U.C. 341,773 members, 3 societies. *L.P.* 242,000 members, 1 society.

The general labour Unions, of which there used to be a considerable number, have now all been absorbed into two large Unions, the N.U.G.M.W. and the Transport and General Workers' Union. The latter, however, belongs to the T.U.C. Group III, Transport Workers. This leaves the general labour group dominated by the *National Union of General and Municipal Workers* (T.U.C. 339,821, L.P. 242,000). The remaining societies in the group are the *Federation of Trade Unions of Salt Workers* (T.U.C. 1,680) and the *National Laundry Workers' Union* (T.U.C. 272). The N.U.G.M.W. has its main strength in the municipal and public utility services, in engineering and shipbuilding, and in miscellaneous factory trades. It is the principal Union for women factory workers outside the textile trades, having absorbed the National Federation of Women Workers. In 1937 it had 33,122 women members.

Note. These seventeen groups complete the tale of T.U.C. membership. But it is desirable to add three further groups—Civil Servants, Teachers, and Professional Workers—in order to get a more complete picture.

Group XVIII. CIVIL SERVICE, INCLUDING POST OFFICE

Employees in this group are prevented by the Trade Unions Act of 1927 from affiliating to any body including workers not in State employment. The most inclusive organisation representing them is the Staff Side of the National Whitley Council for the Civil Service, which represents about 290,000 members. Of these, about 175,000 are in the Post Office, which has four main associations. The largest is the *Union of Post Office Workers* (120,089), representing postmen, postal and telegraph clerks, sorters, and other manipulative grades. The others are the *Post Office Engineering Union* (29,210), the *Sub-Postmasters' Federation* (16,940), and the *Federation of Post Office Supervising Officers* (8,334). The remaining Civil Service departments are represented by the *Civil Service Confederation*.

(125,000), made up of no less than fifty-six separate associations, of widely varying size. Much the largest is the *Civil Service Clerical Association* (57,361), which represents most of the regular workers in the clerical departments, and has absorbed a number of smaller societies. Other associations of some importance are the *Ministry of Labour Staff Association* (11,000), the *Inland Revenue Staff Federation* (12,000), the *Customs and Excise Federation* (3,700), the *Government Minor and Manipulative Grades Association* (4,520), and the *Society of Civil Servants* (8,500), representing the higher grades. The *Institution of Professional Civil Servants* (13,168) is not in the C.S.C., but is represented on the Civil Service Whitley Council.

Manual workers in the Government dockyards and arsenals belong for the most part to the craft Unions included in earlier groups, though there are a few small societies catering exclusively for dockyard labourers and other special grades.

Group XIX. TEACHERS

None of the teachers' associations (except a very small political body, the National Association of Labour Teachers, which is affiliated to the Labour Party, but is not a Trade Union) is associated with either the T.U.C. or the Labour Party, or even with the National Federation of Professional Workers, as the policy of the teachers' societies has been to hold themselves apart from all outside affiliations. The largest society is the *National Union of Teachers* (154,000), open to all professional teachers, but in practice representing mainly qualified teachers in elementary and central schools. It has two rivals, the *National Union of Women Teachers* (9,000), which stands for feminist claims, and the *National Association of Schoolmasters* (about 10,000), a male organisation hostile to the principle of equal pay. The *National Federation of Class Teachers* (10,000) represents mainly certificated teachers, and the *National Association of Head Teachers*, (about 10,000) head masters and head

mistresses in elementary schools. These two specialised bodies work in friendly collaboration with the N.U.T. Teachers in secondary schools have separate associations for men and women—the *Assistant Masters' Association* (4,000) and the *Incorporated Association of Assistant Mistresses* (9,000). There are also separate associations of head masters and head mistresses in secondary schools, as well as the Headmasters' Conference representing the 'public' schools of the upper classes. Technical teachers are organised in the *Association of Technical Teachers* (2,000), and University teachers, except at Oxford and Cambridge, in the *Association of University Teachers*; while teachers in University extra-mural and other forms of adult education are in the *Association of Tutors in Adult Education*. There are also a number of smaller and more specialised bodies, in addition to professional societies not concerned with salaries and conditions of service. Scottish teachers of all grades are strongly organised in a single society, the *Educational Institute of Scotland* (25,000).

Group XX. PROFESSIONAL WORKERS

Some professional workers are included in the T.U.C. Group XVI, Non-Manual Workers, or in other Groups. But mention should also be made of the *National Federation of Professional Workers* (145,300), which includes both Unions in the T.U.C. and non-affiliated bodies. Of T.U.C. Unions in the N.F.P.W. the most important are the Railway Clerks' Association, the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen, the National Union of Clerks, and the clerical sections of the Transport and General Workers' Union, the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, the National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants, the National Union of Printing,* Bookbinding and Paper Workers, the Shop Assistants' Union, and the National Union of Public Employees. Important societies which are affiliated to the N.F.P.W., but not to the T.U.C., include the *National Union of*

Journalists (6,500), the *Electrical Power Engineers' Association* (5,850), the *Association of Supervising Electrical Engineers* (1,000), the *Association of Architects and Surveyors and Technical Assistants* (600), and the *National Union of Labour Organisers and Election Agents* (500).

This survey does not include the various professional institutes—e.g. civil and mechanical engineers, architects, accountants, etc., as these are regarded as falling outside the scope of a survey of Trade Unionism. It should be noted that such bodies as the *British Medical Association* do not belong to the N.F.P.W. Nor do the Civil Servants or the Teachers; but the Civil Service Confederation has acted jointly with the N.F.P.W. in a number of matters dealing with office conditions. The N.F.P.W. also maintains close relations with the T.U.C., and is represented on the T.U.C.'s Advisory Council for Non-Manual Workers.

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